

T E N
S E R M O N S
O N

Practical Subjects.

By JAMES FANCH. *R*

*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith
without wavering (for he is faithful that
promised,)*

*And let us consider one another to provoke unto
love, and to good works.*



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P R E F A C E

SERMONS

Sermons on Practical Subjects as they
there appears to be, according to the system of
the gospel, an inseparable connection between the
doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical
parts of christianity. By the author of the
of the *Practical Subjects*.
a close and home application.

I have made Walking with God the great
concern of the christian, and the leading prin-
ciple of my book, as being an essential part of
the christian religion. For I have said, "I have said."



The title of this book is, "Walking with God,"
among protestant christians, it may seem to
have no great significance. But, in our view,
it is one of the most important, and in fact, the
found to express both the temper and the of a true
christian. It is a word, which, in the bible, is
said of old, "I have said, 'I will walk with God, as to live
great things."

The true believer, the one who lives in the
faith, he lives by the word of the Lord of God.
He lives in him, on gospel-principles, and he walks
in faith by a gospel-idea. The faith is not in a
look and general belief of the doctrine of the
injection of the word of the Lord, and the
truth revealed and purporting to be, what is
but he lives in a constant dependence on the
grace, as the legislative dispensation of
duties, in a closer, bettering attendance on gospel

Non loquuntur sed vivunt verba.
Gal. iii. 2. 26.

P R E F A C E.

THE reason why I have intitled these sermons, *Sermons on Practical Subjects* is because there appears to be, according to the system of the gospel, an inseparable connection between the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical part of christianity: so that there is no doctrine of the gospel whatever, but what is capable of a close and home application.

I have made Walking with God the great concern of the christian life, the leading subject of my book, as being an epitome of all true religion; by faith Enoch walked with God.

The title or term believer, so long in use among protestant divines, though it may seem to some to be growing out of fashion, is, nevertheless one of the most adapted words that can be found to express both the temper and life of a true christian; whose proper character is (as was said of old) not so much to speak as to live great things*.

The true believer, the life he lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith of the son of God^a. he lives in him, on gospel-promises, and he walks in faith by a gospel-rule. His faith lies not in a loose and general belief of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead at the last day; and of certain rewards and punishments in a future world; but he lives in a constant dependence on gospel-grace, in the conscientious discharge of moral duties, in a pious, believing attendance on gospel-ordinances;

* Non-loquimur sed vivimus magna.

^a Gal. ii. 20.

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ordinances; in a thankful improvement of providential mercies; in a humble resignation to the divine disposal in providential dispensations; in a patient endurance of sickness, pain, and worldly crosses; still waiting for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God his Saviour, unto eternal life.

I hope I have in my former publication of my free thoughts on practical religion, with the appendix, satisfied my readers, in some measure at least, what my sentiments are as to the main points of christianity, and their importance; and therefore I leave it with my friends, in one word for all, that I settle in the determination not to embark in any publick printed controversy, having no apparent call of providence for it: all that part I leave to abler hands, and to the direction of the Almighty, as fully persuaded, that as he always has hitherto, so he always will raise up, qualify, and bless a sufficient number of able servants to defend his own gospel.

I have no more to add but my wishes, that this small collection of sermons may be, in some measure, acceptable and useful to any into whose hands they may come.

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RUMSEY,
June 24, 1767.

JAMES FANCH.

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CONVENT

S E R M O N I.

Walking with God, the great
concern of the Christian life.

G E N. v. 24.

Enoch walked with God.—————

H E B. xi. 5.

*By faith Enoch was translated that he
should not see Death,———for, be-
fore his translation he had this testi-
mony that he pleased God.*

LIKENESS to God, and obedi-
ence to his will, are the true glo-
ry, and the highest interest of
human nature; and to have fel-
lowship and communion with
him, as the God of grace, is the very highest
happiness that a reasonable being can enjoy in
the present life: these are represented to our
B view

view in the very short history of the life of Enoch. *Enoch walked with God.* In these words are expressed both his duty to God, and his communion with him: and because he was a true believer in the promised Messiah, his faith is here mentioned: *By faith Enoch was translated*; and in both these, his *living by faith*, and his *walking with God*, lies the sum and substance of his religious character: and his access to God, and acceptance with him, both in the way of *faith* and *duty*: *Believing in God, living to God, and acting in life for God* are expressed in this, that *before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God.*

OMITTING the extraordinary circumstance of the translation of this patriarch, we have other instances of persons under the Old Testament endowed with the same spirit; and notwithstanding the sins and infirmities which always, more or less, attend human life, while in this mortal state, their general tenor and course of life was the same, and is expressed the same way; or in words fully importing the same thing. *Noah walked with God^a. The Lord said unto Abraham walk before me, and be thou perfect^b. My soul followeth hard after God, saith David^c.*

By Enoch and Noah walking with God may import that very near and intimate intercourse of soul and spirit, which these holy men had with God; this is called by St.

^a Gen. vi. 9.

^b Gen. xvii. 1.

^c Psal. lxiii. 8.

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St. John having fellowship with the father, and with the son Jesus Christ.

By walking before God, we may understand that Abram in the exercise of humble faith, and in the conscientious discharge of his duty, considered himself as being always under the protection, under the eye, and under the inspection of his God: by following hard after God David may intend the ardent outgoings of his soul after God; these strong outgoings of soul after God are called, in the beginning of this Psalm, his longing and thirsting for God, for the living God, &c. These things thus variously expressed; especially that in our text, called walking with God, we will consider in the following order,

FIRST, by endeavouring to open and explain the true nature of walking with God:

SECONDLY, shew the great necessity and importance of it in the christian life, And

THIRDLY, the great advantage arising from it.

I. WE are to consider and explain the true nature of walking with God; or what we are to understand by it:

AND here also two things are previously necessary to be considered, in general, before

B 2

we

* 1 John i. 3.

we can proceed orderly to open the more particular nature of walking with God, and the employment of the believing soul therein.

1. IN order to walking with God so as to have fellowship and communion with him, there is, to mankind, an absolute need of the interposition, and intercession of a Mediator.

2. THERE will also be needed a nature renewed by the spirit of God, and the actual implantation of new principles of gospel-grace.

FIRST, in order to walking with God so as to have gracious communion with him, there is, to mankind, an absolute need of the interposition, and intercession of a Mediator.

MAN while he continued in a state of perfect innocence and purity, stood in no need of a Mediator, in order to procure his access to God: as a courtier in a high place of honour and profit, can have access to his prince, upon every necessary and important occasion, without the actual interest and recommendation of a friend, so could Adam; but his fall, by means of the serpent's temptation, quite altered the circumstance and situation of things, between him and his creator, in all the happy effects of it relating to his enjoyment of the divine favour. The cherubims, and the flaming sword turning every way to keep the way of the tree of life, are a lively representation how sin had most dreadfully altered

tered the condition of our first parents: the tree of life during their innocence lay open to their access at all times; but O the change! the angels of light, now posted at the east end of the garden of Eden, became the flaming ministers of divine vengeance: these guard the way and stop up all the avenues to it, so that to attempt it hereafter became dangerous, and to attain it became impossible.

WHAT a lively emblem does this exhibit to us, how impossible it is to attain to salvation by the works of the law? and what a comprehensive, yet compendious exposition of these figures have we in these words? *Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith unto them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* (On the happy side) O the unspeakable glory that breaks in upon our sight immediately thereupon! *But now the righteousness of God without the works of the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe, for there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom*

B 3

God

God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

We find upon all occasions, after the revelation of the first promise of the seed of the woman (i. e. Christ,) who should break the head of the serpent, (i. e. should destroy the power and policy of the devil) there was a continual regard had to a Mediator's interposition, and to his interest with God the Father in the behalf of sinners: this was the end and design of all their sacrifices, viz. to shew that by the sacrifice and death of a Mediator, they only could have access to God.

This is instanced by the apostle, writing to the Hebrews, in the case of *Abel, who by faith offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain.* And why so, but because his sacrifice had respect to Christ as the alone true and proper sacrifice for sin, a sacrifice, in the most strict and proper sense acceptable to God, and available for the expiation of the guilt of sins? *by which he obtained witness that he was a righteous God, testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

IN

* Heb. xi. 4.

In this first account after the fall of Adam there is a double testimony given.

1. God bears a testimony to it, *God testifying of his gifts.*

By this expression we are naturally led to enquire what that testimony was which God gave of the gifts of Abel? And what this testimony was, the whole 11th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews will explain; nay, the whole Old Testament, (of which this chapter is an epitome,) namely, that without faith in Christ's sacrifice it is impossible to please God: God, in his acceptance of Abel's sacrifice (which is the very first example in scripture) has advertised, and admonished the world concerning the only way in which sinners may draw nigh to him in hope of his favour; namely, by faith in the blood of his Son, *even that blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel*. By God's accepting of Abel's sacrifice; while Cain's was rejected, God taught the world that without the shedding of the blood of Christ, the only true sacrifice, there is no remission, and that out of Christ *he is to sinners a consuming fire.*

2. ABEL himself also beareth witness by this his sacrifice and his martyrdom upon the account of it, that there is no other way of salvation but only by Christ. *Abel, being dead, he yet speaketh*, q. d. "Even to this day and to the end of the world," *that*

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there

^a Heb. xii. 24.

there is not salvation in any other^a. That other foundations can no man lay^b. That there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved.

THIS doctrine of nearness of access to God, by the blood of Christ, is a doctrine that depends entirely upon divine revelation, and every part of it is the effect of free sovereign grace, pure, unmixed mercy, without any of the merit, righteousness, or worthiness of the creature in it. *In Christ Jesus they who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ^c. As man had by his apostacy forsaken his God, the fountain of all blessedness. Sin had barred up the way of his access for ever, had not infinite love and mercy opened this new and living way in the gospel. We have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus^d.—Having now a great high-priest who is passed into the heavens Jesus the Son of God.—Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need^e. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water^f. In this the church triumphs, and for this gives glory to God: unto him that hath loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood^g.*

FINALLY

^a Heb. xii. 24.—29. Acts iv. 12. ^b 1 Cor. iii. 11.
^c Ephes. ii. 13. ^d Heb. x. 19. ^e Heb. iv. 16, 18.
^f Heb. x. 22. ^g Rev. i. 5.

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FINALLY this doctrine lies at the bottom as the foundation of all our hope of the divine favour; all other ways, or methods of obtaining reconciliation to God, let them come to us recommended by whomsoever they will, are but gay delusions, and to the last degree dangerous, notwithstanding their being set off with ever so much shew and colour of human reason. Let us therefore ever labour to keep this in our view, let us rest upon it; and this we may safely do with the most assured confidence, since God the father, who must needs know with infinite certainty his own right and prerogative, thus proclaims Christ openly and before all the world, *behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth, I have put my spirit upon him and he shall bring forth judgment (i. e. salvation) to the gentiles^a. Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a^b sure foundation, he that believeth shall not make haste. It hath pleased the Lord to bruise him—when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand^c.*

SECONDLY. In order to walking with God by faith, and to have communion with him, there is an absolute necessity of a renewed nature, (called in scripture regeneration) and the actual implantation of new principles of gospel grace.

THE

^a Isa. xlii. 1. ^b Isa. xxviii. 16. ^c Isa. liii. 10.

The necessity of the soul's being new principled with grace in order to walk with God, and have communion with him, appears from this consideration. Man, by the fall, has lost all his sentiments of love, true gratitude, and filial obedience to God as his heavenly father, his best friend, and his most bountiful benefactor, and moreover has contracted a spirit of enmity to that being, who is the author, origin, and fountain of all blessedness; and so far is he sunk into a state of degeneracy, as that he is unable, as well as unwilling to return to God, so as to commence a new acquaintance with him. This the scriptures represent to us in plain, full and universal terms. *They are all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, there is none that seeketh after God, no not one*^a.

CAN two walk together unless they are agreed? There can be no delightful walking with God till this innate spirit of dislike and reluctancy be subdued. Man is born with the seeds and principles of rebellion in his very nature, and living in a sinful world, and conversing continually with sinners like himself, he imbibes more and more the spirit of disloyalty and treason, and thus becomes, while in his unregenerate state, still yet more and more a rebel daily.

THE heart of man is by a strong metaphor called a heart of stone^b; a stone is one of the most stubborn and refractory things in the material

^a Rom. iii. 10—19. ^b Exek. xxxvi. 26.

terial world, of all substances one of the hardest, and most incapable of alteration; break a flint into ten thousand, thousand pieces, every particle will be stone still; so is it with the heart of the unregenerate sinner; it will much sooner break with despair and death than of itself with sincere repentance.

BUT grace makes a most happy change, not only the innate aversion is removed, but there is begotten within a spirit of love and cordial affection; what was formerly as bitter as death to be parted with, heaven-born souls resign with ease; and what was before their dislike to entertain, now becomes their highest pleasure to receive. *Christ's yoke is easy and his burden light*^a, *his ways pleasantness, and his paths peace unto their mind*^b. Being made free from the condemning guilt, and reigning power of sin, and becoming the servants of God, they have now their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life^c. Thus is the way happily opened for the renewed soul to walk with God, and to hold communion with him. But still let it be remembered that those who have this blessed introduction to fellowship and communion with the father and with the son Jesus Christ, have many difficulties and obstructions in their way that still are apt to hinder their more free and full enjoyment of this blessed privilege; obstructions rise both from within and from without, so that in order to continual walking with God there will need continual supplies of grace,

in

^a Matt. xi. 30.

^b Prov. iii. 17.

^c Rom. vi. 22.

in the power and influence of which this heavenly correspondence may be kept up and improved. As when two persons commence a strict friendship there will need the addition of fresh fuel to keep the flame alive; for as friendly conversation never goes on with vigor but when the affections are warm, so believers find their spiritual life, strength, and vigor going to decay frequently, and when they are thus sunk into decay and deadness, nothing can recover them but new supplies of grace.

Now it ought to be heedfully noted by us, that as all this heavenly correspondence is begun in a way of sovereign free grace and mercy on God's part, so it is maintained and preserved by the same all-sufficient grace that first begun it; and at the same time many things are required in the way of duty in order hereunto, according to the maxims which ought to be ever sacred and inviolable in christian divinity. All duty is ours; assistance and blessing is all from God.

THAT the strictest regard ought to be had to a course of universal obedience, in order to an honourable and comfortable walking with God, is a truth so very evident, both from the word of God, and from the very reason and nature of things, that it does not seem needful in this place, and at this time, to insist upon it; and were I herein to be particular, it would lead me through a whole system of practical christianity.

T H E R E

THERE have been found in the christian world some who have been so bold and daring as to deny the absolute necessity of having an universal regard to the law of God; and others (too many) there are, who having a notion of the truth, and *form of godliness, are without the power, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things; while these, with whom our present concern lies, their conversation is in heaven.*^a

HAVING premised as before those things which are of necessity to prepare the soul for walking with God, it remains to consider the more particular nature of it.

I. THIS walking with God implies the outgoing of the affections after God. My soul followeth hard after God, saith David. The affections, say some, are as it were the feet of the soul, by which it is carried out towards its beloved object, or as the arms with which it strongly embraceth it. God revealing himself in and through Christ, in his glorious perfections of holiness, justice, truth, grace, mercy and love, by the display of these in the gospel; the holy spirit, the author of all internal grace, kindles a flame of love in the soul towards God; a desire to be like him in holiness; and to have some tokens of special love from him.

By walking with God is here intended all the parts of a believer's life, so far as it relates

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^a Philip. iii. 18. 19. 20.

to God, and indeed in the whole, there is in one respect or other this reference and relation; inasmuch as all grace comes from God, *every good and perfect gift* (faith especially) *cometh down from the father of lights*^b, and finally all grace tends towards him and finds no rest, no center but in him; and since the nature of true love is such, it will carry the life in a great measure along with it.

FURTHERMORE sincere love and affection is of an assimilating nature, it creates a similitude of choice and of dislike; the christian by walking with God discovers itself by having respect to what God approves, and by resenting what God is offended with. St. Paul saith, I delight in the law of God after the inner man, and David, it is good for me to draw nigh to God. *O how love I thy law! it is sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*; on the contrary the ways of sin are his strong aversion, *rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law*^c.

SINCERE hatred of sin, and love of holiness are begotten in the soul, so as to begin with its first acquaintance with God^d, and are continued, and improved, by longer walking with him in the ways and means of his own appointment.

WHAT can be a greater evidence of the truth and sincerity of the christian's affection to God than this, that when an object is presented to it, innocent in its own nature, and promising much happiness and comfort as to the present life,

^a Ephes. ii. 3.

^b James i. 17.

^c Psal. cxix. 136.

^d Zech. xii. 10.

life, he is so jealous of it, so fearful to entertain it? for what but this, that he is afraid it will carry his heart away from God? and in the end prove an impediment to his communion with him?

THIS is often found to be the care and solicitude of the truly gracious, how frequently on their knees in their closets do they intreat, that their temporal enjoyments may not prove a snare to them, so as to hinder their sweet communion with their God. * This is a strange thing to carnal men, all their care is to get as many and as much of the pleasures and profits of life as possible, and keep them as long as possible; it is no concern to them in the least what becomes of their heart and affection, as to God, and Christ, and heavenly things; their affections are promised before hand for these earthly things, and when these pleasures arrive are intended at large to be given up to them.

To find the affections going out towards God in this manner, and to retain a holy watch over the heart lest it wander after lying vanities, is a sure sign of the christian's walking with God. This is that love which is as strong as death, that jealousy which is as cruel as the grave, the coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame, many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. *Song, viii. 6.*

AND

* Lord, said Luther, I am afraid I am going to have my portion in this life, but I solemnly protest I will not be put off with these things.

AND this gracious propensity of mind towards God will excite not only one but many, nay all the affections that are pure and innocent: it raises in the inmost soul the most sincere and intense hatred against sin, as that which is contrary to the holy nature and will of God, its best beloved object. It awakens its zeal for the honour and glory of the great Redeemer, like Elijah it becomes jealous for the Lord of hosts.

THE men of this world wonder at this; they are not able to conceive what need there is of all this concern about the public cause and interest of Christ in the world; for since they have little or no regard for these things themselves, no taste or relish for them, they can't see any reason why others should. They can't see but if a man lives honestly and quietly among his neighbours and acquaintance, he may be a very good christian, without so much concern and solicitude; but true care and deep affection will, in temporal cases, between friend and friend, concern itself about a thousand things that indifferent persons know nothing about or regard; thus will it be, and much more, with the spiritual minded christian.

2. This walking with God supposes or implies nearness to God, and some free and intimate acquaintance with God in the way and exercise of grace. We write unto you saith the Apostle, that ye might have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the father and

and with the son Jesus Christ^a. Nor was this an airy flight of fancy or gay flourish of rhetoric, but it was the product of calm, solid, and well digested experience. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life——declare we unto you. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the father^a.

THIS freedom supposes not only that the person stands right with God as to his pardon, favour, and acceptance, but also that he is in some degree sensible of it, he that has lost his sense of interest, so as to take no pleasure and comfort in it, cannot for the time walk with God in that way we are now speaking of; altho' it be allowed that there remains the root and principle of grace, and he may be in a safe state as to his eternal salvation. *The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal the Lord knoweth them that are his^b*. Those we are now speaking of must not only have grace sufficient to keep them from despair, and final ruin, but also to delight and rejoice them; those who walk together with agreement, must exchange mutual tokens of love and friendship on both sides: this is the very life and spirit of walking with God.—But more particularly,

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1. THIS

^a 1 John i. throughout. ^b 2 Tim. ii. 19.

1. THIS of walking with God in love, supposes a liberty of access to God at all times, not only at the more stated times and seasons of solemn worship, but also a disposition and propensity to it at all seasons (I mean at any season). The christian that thus walks with God, is in some good degree perswaded of his liberty to come to a throne of grace as often as he will, and of continuing as long as he finds a will, and of uttering all his wishes and desires after spiritual blessings as much as he will, or can^a.

A FRIEND loveth (saith *Solomon*) at all times, cordial love and friendship, will not be circumscribed within the low and narrow forms of common conversation. Others, if they have the visits of God in the common and more ordinary benefactions of providence, (or at most) the more stated means of grace, they seldom go any higher; but those who walk closely with God cannot be contented with the common and ordinary allowance, these must spend more time, and more thoughts upon and with God than others do, or care to do; these have much to say to God, not so much a multitude of words, but much matter, they have as it were a multiplicity of business with God every time they draw nigh to him: a multitude of desires, fears and complaints to breathe out before him. Lord, (saith *David*) all my desire is

^a Heb. iv. 16. Let us come boldly, &c. i. e. with liberty to speak freely all our mind, as the word imports.

is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee ^a. These are often repeated as matters of very great concern, and still the nearer the soul approaches to God, every thing still, of its kind, and in regard to the great and ultimate end, the glory of God, seems more and more important.

In the times of prayer, the liveliness of the affections, the integrity of the wishes, the aims, the ends, the hopes, the expectations, in praying for temporal blessings, how it shall behave if the petition is granted; how the christian shall be able to bear a shocking disappointment, so as in some measure to honour God in a due submission to his sovereign will; and also with what frame of mind; blessings are to be pleaded for with God, according to their various natures, use and end; these things which are but little regarded by such who go on in a round of religion in a general way, take up much of his care, thoughts, and time.

Such closet-christians seek opportunities of conversing with God, and in the intermediate spaces of time, their souls are conversing with him by frequent ejaculations. Well might the Psalmist say, it is good for me to draw nigh to God ^b.

It should seem by the more general current of David's psalms that his soul was most singularly employed; and even ingrossed as it were in communion with God, this was so much

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his

^a Psa. xxxviii. 9.^b Psa. lxxiii. ult.

his element, that in the raptures of his devotion, he seems to have lost sight of the world, and all regard to it; and while his soul is so deeply engaged, it commonly ends in this as a central point, a wish, that it might be perpetual. One thing have I desired, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his temple. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee. I will praise the Lord—while I have any being. O God! early will I seek thee—my soul thirsteth for thee—my flesh longeth for thee. It was the powerful manifestations of divine love that his heart was so intensely set upon, because thy loving kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness—my soul shall praise thee with joyful lips*.

I HAVE sometimes dwelt in thought upon these experiences of the royal Psalmist, and these strong out-goings of his soul, with singular pleasure; to think how this divine flame broke through every impediment and surmounted every temporal difficulty. David lived under the dark and cloudy dispensation of the old testament; his light into the adorable mysteries of grace, and salvation came to him through a long winding train of legal ceremonies, types, and shadows; so that according to the com-

* See this almost every where in the Psalms, as 23. 27. 42. 43. 63. 73. &c.

mon rule, the more difficult the medium of conveyance, the fainter the influence. †

DAVID was for the greater part of life, continually full of public business, of all concerns in life the most difficult and perplexing; add to all this he was seated on the throne of Israel, and yet among all the temptations of a court, and the splendors of a throne, such was his zeal that all seemed to be swallowed up and lost amidst his contemplations of the love of God. One day in thy courts is better than a thousand; (else where) I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

WE are apt to ascribe much to solitude and retirement to promote devotion, and (if freed from the errors of enthusiasm and superstition) we judge right; but in David we see what the power of this heavenly principle will do even in the midst of a multiplicity of worldly business. Happy they whose souls feel these divine impressions, while under the gospel dispensation, they enjoy so many superior advantages! something at least of this nature the believer enjoys who walks conscientiously with God; who walks humbly before him; although for the most part he is ready to complain like him of old, *arare hour, but a short one!* But however short and transient these seasons may seem, they are indeed the golden sands of time.

C 3

Could

† See Robert's key to Psa. xxiv.

Could I command this spacious land
 And the more boundless sea,
 For one blest hour at thy right-hand
 I'd give them both away.

Pfal. lxxxiv. Dr. WATTS.

WHILE these happy seasons last, nothing repents the christian more than lost time. O how many precious hours and days (says he) have I wasted in empty unconcerning vanities!

2. THIS freedom of communion with God as thus walking with him, implies a strong bent and disposition of soul still to abide with God.

THIS part seems beyond my power to illustrate, but souls who have known by experience these interviews, will, nevertheless, be able in some measure to enter into my meaning; for I am not now treating of grace in its lowest degrees, and in its most languid exercises, but in its elevations, and gradual improvement: here there will be formed an inclination to abide with God, even when the seasons of a more stated communion with God are impeded, as they often will through a multiplicity of worldly incidents. The soul finds itself held fast, and sweetly detained in meditation on heavenly things, the fancy and invention grows richly fruitful in thoughts of God, and Christ, and grace, and heavenly things. And as the sun when it shines in its full strength gilds all the objects his beams dart upon, so all things now shine with the majesty and glory of God which the mind looks upon

upon. Marvellous are thy works O Lord, and that my soul knoweth right well ^a.

WHEN I awake (saith David) I am still with thee. I am continually with thee ^a. Being thus conducted as it were into the inner court of holy communion with his God, he seems to himself to be in the anti-chamber to the blessed above, and as though it were but an easy transition from this life to heaven. Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory ^b.

THIS holy and delightful detention of mind the psalmist expresses frequently. My soul followeth hard after God, thy right-hand holdeth me ^b. ——— Nevertheless I am continually with thee, thy right-hand hath holden me ^b.

THE Christian finds by experience that his heart is apt to fly off from God, so that he may justly ascribe not only the commencement, but the continuance of this intercourse to free and sovereign grace, his heart is like a wandering fickle visitor who finds frequent frivolous excuses of business to call him away; but a gracious loving Saviour like one in the ardour of true friendship, holds him fast by the hand to prolong the conversation.

AND after all, those who enjoy the highest, the most frequent and the most intimate communion with God find much variation of frame, every day almost, more or less, they

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will

^a Psal. cxxxix. 14—18. ^b Psal. lxxiii. 23, 24.

will find their mind apt to sink, their affections chill by almost insensible degrees, they know not how or by what means; and their meditations on heavenly things degenerate into weakness, and are mixed with impertinent imaginations; and yet still there is in the main an abiding with God and a continuing with him; and it is by this means that though the divine converse may faint for a while, yet the communication is not broken off utterly.

FROM hence we may be able to judge, in some degree how it is with our own souls, as to their more stated and habitual inclination: interruptions and avocations they may meet with, and often will, while on this side the grave; but which way do our minds incline most? If towards communion with God, and Christ, and heavenly things, if we still breathe and long for these things, we still hold communion with God, and walk with him, and his presence is with us; the desire (saith the church) of our soul is unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee^a.

THE saints are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation^b; otherwise they would lose not only their actual and sensible communion with God, but all their spiritual inclination towards it.

THIS frame of mind, a disposition to abide with God, ought to be sought for and endeavoured after even in our very darkest seasons and

^a Isa. xxvi. 8.

^b 1 Pet. i. 5.

and under the most gloomy dispensations of providence.

AND this, as hard and difficult as it seems to frail nature, (which is apt to shudder at darkness) yet is still supposed not to be impossible, who is there among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God^a.

IT is our great failing to think our God is not with us because we cannot see him, but certainly this must be a mistake, he must needs be still with us who hath said he will never leave us nor forsake us. O Jacob, fear not for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine: (I will be with thee as thine, I will preserve thee as mine) when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee^b. Fear not for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee by the right-hand of my righteousness^c.

THE manifested loving kindness of God, every true believer will own, is better than life; nevertheless the sensible joys of assurance are not the certain, and only rule to judge

^a Isa. l. 10.

^b Isa. xlii. 1, 2.

^c xli. 10.

judge of the divine presence with us, and of our communion with him.

For if the graces of delight, joy, thanksgiving, and praise flourish most in the sunshine; humility, repentance, faith, patience, and resignation of soul, to the will of God, give great improvements, even in the darkest and most stormy seasons.

We have, saith the apostle, an anchor sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. Wind and storms try the strength of the anchor and cable.

3. THIS walking with God also regards the impression that is made upon the human mind of the omnipresence of God.

THE Lord said unto Abraham, *walk before me and be thou perfect.*

WALKING with God in this way of near and intimate communion with him, as with a very dear friend, is so far from taking off the mind from that solemn, awful reverence, which we justly owe to the divine being, that it very much increases it; for still there is and will be for ever, an infinite distance between God and the most exalted creature, as to nature, glory and perfection. *He being exalted above all (created,) blessing and praise^a. He hath set his glory above the heavens, and humbled himself, even to behold, favour and reward the works done there^b.*

We may gaze on created beauty till it palls the fancy, till it seems to tarnish before our eyes,

^a Nehem. ix. 5.

^b Psal. cxiii. 4, 6.

eyes, and wither even before its time: constant, familiar, and uninterrupted converse, with the greatest earthly emperor, would in time take off the awe of his majesty; but God is every way and in all respects infinite, and above all compare: the angels that dwell nearest the throne above, and *behold the face of God in heaven*^a, yet are still in a bending bowing posture, and as it were with a vail before their eyes. The effulgence of deity being too dazzling for any mere created being fully to behold.

THE nearer the believer approaches to God in the way of faith and love, the more he finds himself struck with a solemn awe of the divine presence. So saith Isaiah, *Wo is me for I am undone for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts*^b! How dreadful is this place (saith Jacob) this is none other but the house of God, *this is the gate of heaven*^c.

THESE instances indeed are visionary, and very extraordinary; nevertheless, the solemn awe of the omnipresence of God, and the deep reverence of his majesty, is peculiar to near communion with him, and still bears a proportion to it; others may have the notion of the universal presence of God, *that his eyes behold the reins and the heart*^d, *that even hell is naked to his view, and destruction hath no covering*^e; but as the brightest beams of the sun

^a Matt. xviii. 10. ^b Isa. chap. vi. ^c Gen xxviii. 17.

^d Jer. xvii. 10. ^e Job xxvi. 6.

sun strike not the blind, so these principles are to the unregenerate, dead and powerless, having no commanding abiding influence on the heart and life.

THE command is, *serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling*^a: from hence arises in the mind of the truly pious, a continual fear of an unbecoming frame of mind in his presence; and especially at the solemn and stated seasons of religious worship. *He that walketh with God walketh in the light, for God is light*^b, and the more the true christian walks in this light, the more will he by degrees see his own spots and blemishes, not only the weaknesses common to human nature, but these more inward stains and blemishes of his own soul; and therefore the need of the blood of Christ to cleanse him from all sin.

AND as this strong light makes the least discernable sin hateful, it makes holiness appear most lovely, and sets it in the most beautiful view imaginable, and gives it an attractive power: *what manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of conversation and godliness*^c? *Be ye holy for I am holy*^d.

BLESSED are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled^e. Whoever therefore is a stranger to these holy emotions of soul, must at present have but a very thin tincture of religion.

THIS

^a Psal. ii. 11.

^b John i. 7.

^c 2 Pet. iii. 11.

^d 1 Pet. 1. 16.

^e Matt. v. 6.

THIS therefore will serve to shew another important difference between such who walk with God, and those who do not: this will try the comforts, delights, and joys which persons profess to have under the hearing of the word, in prayer, or at the ordinance of the Lord's supper, has thy attendance (O christian) been with a view of sin in its odious deformity, and holiness in its heavenly beauty, or have these objects glanced but slightly on thy affections leaving no deep impression? Or have they created in thee a deep and earnest solicitude after purity of heart and affections? after heavenly mindedness? after universal conformity to God in all thy inmost powers? If these things have been the issue and effect of thy holy duties, bless God for so valuable a mercy; but on the other hand, if no impressions like these have been found; dread, O dread more than death, unholy, un-sanctified comforts!

BLESSED are the pure in heart for they shall see God, i. e. they shall experience his love; and enjoy his grace. You have (saith Christ) a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy^a.
 * These holy souls are the true candidates for eternity.

THIS

^a Rev. iii. 4.

* Among the Romans those who solicited for places of honour and profit, wore a white shining garment for two years before their advancement, hence were they called candidates.

THIS worthiness in Rev. iii. 4. means meetness, fitness or preparedness, and answers to the words of the apostle, Col. i. 12. giving thanks unto the father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

THIS holiness, this worthiness, or meetness, for the enjoyment of God, so as to abide with him, is so congruous, so perfectly natural to this divine correspondence, that no effect whatever can follow more certainly from its cause than this doth; although not so immediately discovered in all its branches; and though it may seemingly be slow in its operations.

FAMILIAR, frequent conversation is of a marvellous transforming assimilating nature, and this of communion with God is much more so. He that walketh with the wise (saith Solomon) shall be wise, i. e. it is the best, the most likely way to be so; but it is not always found to be so; far from it; but here the effect cannot fail, since God has chosen these unto holiness, Christ has redeemed his people with his own blood, that they may be presented to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, the Lord who calls and commends them to holiness gives them grace accordingly; and therefore invites them to come boldly to a throne of grace, that they may—obtain grace to help them in every time of need,

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CAN any one thus walking with God, thus favoured with his grace, honoured with his presence, thus awed with his majesty, and with the glories of his holiness, give a loose to carnal passions, and impure affections? Impossible as for light to mingle with darkness; what a man may do when withdrawn from God, and at the same time under strong temptations is quite another question.

NOR will this sense of the divine presence rest in the prohibition of the more gross and impure pleasures of life; but it will have a powerful tendency to curb the excesses of those which are in their own nature lawful and innocent; hence it comes to pass, that when the pious conscientious christian gives into the amusements of life the pleasantries of conversation, he recalls, and checks himself frequently, for being too long or too excessive in these things, how does he chide himself, thinking that while he only thought to put on the agreeable for a while, to entertain a friend in a dull and melancholy hour, herein he has frequently failed, serious religion has been out of mind too long; something of a serious nature has been made too free with, or the frailties or follies of others have been treated too lightly or too severely. Thus does the thought of the awful eye of God being upon him, call him back again, when, in mind wandering from him. He that by faith walks with God, like Moses endureth as seeing him who is (*to mortal eyes*) invisible, he

he sees the face, the eye of God every where, to deter him from sin, and to excite him to his duty.

THE reflecting upon his daily and hourly weaknesses furnish him with abundant matter for confession of sin in closet prayer for humiliation, godly shame and sorrow; and this again leads him by renewed exercises of faith and hope to the blood of Christ, for new applications of pardoning grace, and for fresh communications of sanctifying grace, that fountain still standing open for sin and for uncleanness.

FURTHERMORE, this believing apprehension of the divine presence, as it has a very commanding influence upon the heart and life, so it has a comforting influence under every trial, temptation, affliction, and every vicissitude of human life: if he walks humbly and reverently with his God, with watchfulness, and self-denial he does not serve with the dread of a slave, but with filial duty, love and obedience.

THIS impression thus inwrought in the renewed mind, by the Holy Spirit, is called by the prophet, the Lord's putting his fear in the hearts of his people, his writing his law in their minds; and this is graciously intended to be of universal use through all the vast concerns which the christian has with his God.

HITHERTO has been seen the great advantage of walking with God in its more general nature,

nature, it remains to give yet some more particular and distinct instances of its usefulness, which is the

THIRD HEAD proposed to consideration.

I. THIS close walking with God is the only way to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I AM, saith Christ, (in prophesy) like a green fir-tree, from me is thy fruit found^a; all my springs are in thee. This is a truth, read the words which way you will; refer them either to God or to his church, all his springs of grace are in them, and all their springs are in him; in him their graces live and move and have their being. Their springs of life, strength and influence, are in him as their fountain: and his springs are in them as so many streams: their springs are in him as the cause; and his springs are in them as effects. Now as the nearer the fountain, the purer and sweeter the stream; the nearer the sun, the more powerful the influence; the nearer the center, the more powerful the attraction; so still the nearer to God, the stronger the influence of all vital principles: Can there be a more powerful motive to close walking with God, than the consideration that the enjoyment of the love of God is the very light of life; nay, even the very spirit and soul of it?

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AND

^a Hof. xiv. 8.

AND could we in the least hesitate here, have we not this truth confirmed to us by the experience of all the saints in all ages of the world since the beginning of time? In the text we have an instance of the greatest antiquity. Enoch walked with God, and was not^a, for God took him. Enoch was a prophet, the seventh from Adam, Jude xiv; but the greatness of his character lay not in his inspiration but in his grace, from hence had he the testimony that he pleased God.

THE apostle Paul found that all his strength, life and comfort lay in his nearness to his Saviour; this was still the mark, the prize, the high calling to which he was continually pressing forward. — *That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. — That I may win Christ and be found in him, — if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead, &c.* And when he came within sight of the goal, and the prize was in a near view, with what a firm and steady tranquility of soul does he express himself? *I suffer, nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day^b. I am now ready to be offered^{*}, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

^a Phil. iii. through.

^b 2 Tim. i. 12.

^{*} Saint Paul was now like a bound victim, ready to pour out his blood at the foot of the altar. I suffer, &c.

band. I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for a crown of righteousness.

AND, next to the instances contained in the lively oracles of God, can any thing give life to an argument like the experience of the effects of things upon our own spirits? Have we not ever found our spiritual strength to be in a proportion to our more sensible nearness to God? Has he not, ever been since we knew him, or as (St. Paul saith) *rather since we have been known of him*, our refuge and strength^b. Our strong habitation, our city of refuge, for us continually to fly to?

ON the other hand, when we have withdrawn ourselves at a distance from God by our cold and criminal negligence, have we not soon found the powers of our mind in their actings and exercise toward God much enfeebled? Have we not found that, from a guilty consciousness of remissness in watching

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unto

&c. q. d. "I have suffered much already as a confessor for the gospel, and I am now a deep sufferer, and stand as a candidate for martyrdom; but I am neither afraid nor ashamed, for I expect very soon to have my discharge sent me from this present warfare, by the great captain of my salvation. *I know in whom I have believed*, and I rest in so steadfast a persuasion of the truth and justice of my cause, that if the same things were to be done again I would do them, and with my last dying breath I would speak them. Not counting all the suffering of this present life worthy to be compared with the glory, I believe, will be revealed at the last day."

^a 2 Tim. iv, 6, 7, 8.

^b Psal. xlii. 1.

unto prayer; and by spiritual meditation, between duty and duty, to keep up constant communion with God, have we not I say, found ourselves grow shy of a throne of grace? ashamed to come near our God? and that we durst not make so free as formerly!

SHOULD not these experiences teach us both the great necessity, and rich advantage of close walking with God? And what though our good dispositions, and best frames are no part of our recommendation to the favour and acceptance of God; are they not nevertheless such means which God doth most frequently bless with his presence; such means, which, if we wilfully neglect, or but formally attend to, God may most justly punish us with foul-darkness and trouble; such means without which we can never justly hope or expect to enjoy God comfortably, no not one day while in the present life?

2. THIS is the only way whereby we can honour God, and shew our sincere gratitude to him.

IN vain shall we endeavour with all our art and eloquence to perswade any one we love our friend, our benefactor, while we apparently neglect his company, and at the same time give it freely to the worthless and unworthy: In vain do we profess love to God, and a belief of our infinite obligations to him, while we give the world more of our care and diligence, more of our thoughts and solicitude, more of our

our delight, rest, and complacency than we do to him.

THIS neglect is a very great and pernicious evil; it is of an exceeding stupifying nature, so that still those who are most affected with it, are growing daily more and more insensible.

THE question then is this, is our too great neglect of keeping up a close walk with God, as to the bent, and inward disposition of our souls, our real and sincere concern? our real pain? our sincere grief and uneasiness? if so, it is a good sign, and we may, and ought to take the comfort of it; it ought to be to us a matter of thanksgiving to the God of all grace, that he still by his holy spirit keeps these solitudes alive in us, which our carnal and corrupt part, would otherwise soon efface utterly.

If sincere gratitude and affection for a worthy friend, is such an inward principle of the human soul, that is most exquisitely sensible; can it be thought that our love to God can be in any measure awake, and we not soon sensible of the distance and withdrawment? Are we in earnest in our professed zeal for his honour and glory? If we are indeed so, we shall esteem the manifesting his praise in the way of our duty, as well as our own safety in the way of his favour.

It is not impossible, but that there may be such a thing as a strict regard to all the externals of christianity, and yet no walking with God at all, as to what has been here described; should not this put us upon a strict enquiry,

Whether we indeed give him the reverence of our souls, as well as our outwardly professed devotion? *God is a spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, for he seeketh such to worship him.*^a

3. This is the most likely, and most effectual way to be useful to others.

Our concerns in life, as christians, lie among many persons of very different casts humours, characters, interests, opinions, and dispositions; but all are reducible to these two classes, *such who fear God, and such who fear him not.*^b

To which of these can we hope to be useful, any farther than we, in some measure, conscientiously walk with God? Can we hope to help our fellow-christians by our advice, admonitions and prayers, if our frames are dead and carnal, our tempers and pursuits worldly and covetous, our passions ungovernable, and our behaviour haughty and imperious, rough and uncivil, or mean and sordid? How can we with any face hope to assist them in our prayers, if we can allow ourselves to be negligent in our applications to a throne of grace, in our own particular soul-cases? Can we reasonably hope to find success in recommending such things to others, the importance of which we do not for ourselves feel in their power? Can we freely urge those promises of grace to others, while we ourselves are indifferent as to their home-application? How can we urge, with the Psalmist, O taste and

^a John iv. 23. 24.

^b Mal. iii. 18.

and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him^a; when at the same time we have lost our own appetite to divine things?

As to the graceless, what can we say to them, can we hope to gain over their attention to those very things to which we ourselves are cold and indifferent?

THERE is an intrinsic energy in the christian religion, when in its power, an influence which commands respect, even from by-standers, in a manner inexplicable; this the unbelieving sometimes see, tho' what it is they do not know, nor do they care to enquire, from any concern they have for their own souls; nevertheless they cannot help sometimes discovering their conscious conviction; not always willingly or designedly. Whence else comes it to pass that they shall seem so to respect grave and sober professors, persons deeply serious and of good report? At least they will curb their insolence and effrontery, when those who live loosely and carelessly, are their scorn and derision; nay oftentimes more so than those who never pretended to any religion at all.

A good name (says Solomon) is as precious ointment; it is valuable for itself, and it is so, as the end and use of it: when a man in business has lost his good name, his credit in his negotiations will be worth little; credit being the life and spirit of human correspondence.

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God

^a Psa. xxxiv. 8.

God gave us our talents in life to trade for his honour and glory among mankind; to some five, to some two, to none less than one. Should we not then be fired with a holy emulation to keep up our christian character, that so we may traffic for God to the most advantage? And how can this be done if we neglect our communion with God, or how can we so much as hope for it? Our all in the christian life, both as to present grace, and our hope of eternal glory, comes thro' the hand of Christ our great Mediator and Advocate, and as our supplies depend upon continual returns, and remittances from a throne of grace; if these returns fail us, whatever we may confidently imagine of our past stock of experience, our souls will soon sink into deep poverty, and by this means we shall lose both our savour in ourselves, and in a great measure our usefulness to others.

BUT suppose we could keep up our character as christians, in the opinion of men, in its full brightness, while as to the present circumstances of our souls, we sink in the sight of him with whom we have most of all to do as to our growth in grace, will it any way avail us that, even christian men should still retain a high opinion of us, while Christ himself declares us wretched and miserable, and poor, and having, tho' a name that we are alive, are still at heart cold and lukewarm, dead, or at least, stiff, and half frozen? *If (said a good man) I did want testimonials, I could obtain many from my christian friends,*

friends, but if Christ will not give me a character, what will become of me?

WOULD we then assist others by our christian advice, and forward their happiness by our prayers and example, let us ourselves walk with God.

4. THIS only can, to purpose, wean us from the world, and take off our inordinate love to it.

MAN, by the fall, is sunk into the low and depraved principle of creature-love; and nothing but the constant exercise of gracious communion with God can remove it. Men try all the other rules in the world, urge all manner of arguments, plead all the most animating examples in the universe to no purpose, if this be wanting.

WE often urge, in defence of christianity, the weakness of the rules and dictates of the moral heathens, to form men aright in their hearts and lives; and though the doctrines and duties of the christian religion, are inexpressibly more sublime, its doctrines being by supernatural revelation, and by consequence, its motives of all others most constraining, yet if there be not an inward experience of a living union with Christ, if we are not risen with him by the faith of the operation of God, and if we do not thereby walk in newness of life, we shall find all the rest to be to little purpose.

WE complain of nothing more frequently than of the entanglement of our affections by the world; how often are we deceived and betrayed

trayed thro' its false appearances ! this evil, nothing but sincere delight in God, and love to Christ our Redeemer, can ever remove ; nothing can secure us but this.

ARE we afraid of having our affections again entangled with the vanities of the world, as they have been too often already ; let us give them to our God, humbly intreating him, in our frequent earnest prayers, that he would take them to himself, and secure them for us ; * not doubting but we shall obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in our times of need.

5. THIS only can calm and compose our minds in the views of death and dissolution.

Do we indeed hope, that through grace, God is our Father, and Christ our Almighty Redeemer ? Do we hope that we have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ. Oh how will this conduce to make our passage out of time into eternity, easy and comfortable ! *This God is our God, for ever and ever, he will be our guide, even unto death* ^a.

THE common topics of christian consolation (according to the more modern taste) are the inward consciousness of our sincerity, and the sweet reflection, upon a death-bed, of a well-spent life ; we allow all the comforts that can justly

- When I confess'd my wand'ring ways,
Thou heard'st my soul complain,
Grant me the teachings of thy grace,
Or I shall stray again.

cxix. Psa. 9th part, Dr. Watts.

^a Psa. xlii. 18.

justly rise from these considerations: but at most and at best we cannot behold our sincerity, or look back upon a well-spent life, and behold them in a just light, but there will arise to view a consciousness of innumerable sinful weaknesses and imperfections, so that, at best, these dying cordials can be but weak and feeble; but the meditating on the everlasting love of God, as being merciful to our unrighteousness, and blotting out all our transgressions, to meditate on the infinite merit and complete righteousness of Christ, these afford standing, abounding, overflowing consolation, even to joy unspeakable, and full of glory^a. Let us then seek our surest, our sweetest, our sublimest comforts here; other considerations may fail us, but these never will; other comforts have at best a disagreeable mixture in them, but these are pure streams from the foot of the throne of grace, the pure river of the water of life, as clear as crystal^b. Now these heavenly supports, these pure, refined, strong pleasures, can be expected no other way than by walking with God.

NEED any thing be added to the support or vindication of this argument? Walking with God is, (according to the nature and degree of it) the summit of felicity: God is infinitely blessed in the knowledge, and in the enjoyment of his own infinite perfections, therefore the contemplation on, and the enjoyment of God, must be the highest created felicity. To
know

^a 1 Pet. i. 8.^b Rev. xxii. 1.

know God, to be like God, to enjoy God, is the heaven of angels.

AND even here on earth, while we see but thro' a glass darkly (i. e. comparatively) one glance, one ray, one beam of the special love of God darted upon the soul, thro' a duty, or in an ordinance, is worth more, infinitely more, than a whole life of our poor, weak, tho' sincere obedience.

FINALLY, my brethren, if these things are true, if these things are honourable, if these things are just, if these things are pure, if these things are lovely, if these things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise in *walking with God*, think on these things *.

* Phil. iv. 8.



S E R-

S E R M O N II.

The unfearchable Riches of Chrift,
the Sum, and Subftance, of a
Gofpel-Miniftry.

E P H E S. iii. 8.

*Unto me, who am lefs than the leaft of all
saints is this grace given, that I fhould
preach among the Gentiles, the unfearch-
able riches of Chrift.*

ST. PAUL, the laft, and one of the
chief apoftles, was at this time a pri-
foner at Rome. * The converfion, life,
persecutions, travels, and writings of
this eminent perfon, take up a confiderable
part

* Paul was now under confinement, being fent pri-
foner to Rome upon his own appeal, Acts xxvi. 32.
chap. xxvii. 1. &c. his imprifonment and martyrdom
were under Nero, one of the moft cruel tyrants that ever
filled a throne; yet here God found him much work to
do for a feafon.

part of the New Testament, and contain many doctrines and instructions of very great importance to the churches of Christ.

THE calling and gathering of this church we have an account of, somewhat at large, in the acts of the apostles, chap. xiii. 19, 20, 'till the time of his taking his last and final farewell.

IN his last farewell oration, he seems strongly to predict to them, that however they might seem at present, to be in flourishing circumstances as to gifts, and graces, yet he foresaw that after his departure from them, things would alter with them much to their prejudice. (*Now saith he*) *I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds, and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. * For I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves, shall* men

* See his particular address to the elders of the church, chap. xx. xxviii. &c.

men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them ^a.

It were nothing strange to suppose, that after a final parting, so deeply affectionate on both sides, and under such strong impulses as St. Paul felt when he left them, that these things should frequently recur to his mind, in some of the more calm and deliberate hours of his confinement; and that these reflections, might give rise to many things suggested in this deep epistle.

It should seem highly probable, from the style and contents of this epistle to the Ephesians, that they were, when St. Paul went to Rome, well instructed in the main principle of christianity, since, after a very short preface, he leads their thoughts up to the very fountain-head of gospel-salvation. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption thro' his blood, according to the riches of his grace* ^b.

THE mind and soul of St. Paul was so full of this blessed theme grace, that in his writings, he

^a Acts xx. 22—30.

^b Eph. i. 4—7.

he finds room for it every where, and seems to see it in every thing; here redemption thro' the blood of Christ is the riches of his grace^a. Regeneration and effectual calling are the exceeding riches of his grace^b. In our text, the whole gospel is overflowing full of it, unsearchable riches of grace. Unto me — is this grace given, who was this grace given to? to Paul; who or what was Paul? one less than the least of all saints †; (as elsewhere the chief of sinners) what was it he here calls grace given to him, but a copy of his original commission. Acts ix. 15. *Go thy way (speaking to Ananias) for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles.* And more at large, Acts xxvi, 16. *Rise, stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of the things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee. Delivering thee from the people, and from the gentiles, to whom I send thee. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified thro' faith in me.*

It seems wonderful how St. Paul, from the very first of his receiving his instructions from his Lord and Master Jesus Christ, the captain of salvation, was full of his commission, with what

^a Eph. i. 4—7.

^b Chap. ii. 7.

† A most elegant, and beautiful diminutive of a diminutive.

what humility, with what gratitude, with what thankfulness does he receive it? And with what indefatigable pains, and labour does he execute it? And even the most disagreeable, the suffering part was not only patiently, but thankfully received by him. I will shew him (saith Christ to Ananias, Acts ix. 16.) what great things he must suffer for my name's sake. Unto him was this grace given, not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for his sake^a; to take his commission whole as it was, and not like some mean souls who are proud of a gay commission; proud to parade in shining regimentals, but shiver at the approach of a dangerous and bloody campaign: as to Paul, bonds and afflictions in every city waited for him*, but none of all these things moved him. Neither did he, in this case, and in so good a cause, count, even his life dear to him, in hope of finishing his course with joy. On the unsearchable riches of the grace of Christ he lived daily^b, and by these he taught others, to whom he preached, to live also^c, it being still his earnest expectation, and his hope *that Jesus might be magnified in his body in life and death*^d.

E P H E S. iii. 8.

“UNTO me, who am, less than the least of
“all saints, is this grace given, that I should
“preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable
“riches of Christ.”

E P H E S. iii. 8. PRO-

^a Phil. i. 29.

^{*} Acts xx. 23. Margin.

^b Gal. ii. 20.

^c Ephes. ii. 8.

^d Phil. i. 20,

PROPOSITION I.

THE setting forth, or displaying the grace of Christ, *as riches unsearchable*, is the sum and substance of a gospel-ministry.

PROPOSITION II.

ALL the qualifications peculiar to the ministers of Christ, as his ministers, with all their success in their ministrations are all of grace. *To me is this grace given.*

PROPOSITION III.

A just sense of the greatness, and importance of this work will produce sincere humility. *Unto me who am less than the least of all saints.*

Prop. I. THE setting forth or displaying the grace of Christ, *as riches unsearchable*, is the sum and substance of a gospel-ministry.

AND here we may note, (as a *postulatum*) that all we know, or can know of Christ, whether of his person who and what he is, his characters, titles, offices, or relations, all these we must learn only from the word of God, and from that only. Christians ought therefore to be humbly contented with such light and instruction as may be gained from the plain and uncorrupted word of God. All things (saith Christ) are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the

the Son will reveal him ^a. Simon Peter saith to his Lord, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God*. To which he answers, *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven* ^b. Christ is called *wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace* ^c. One in the form of God, and who thought it not robbery to be equal with God ^d. *The brightness of his* (i. e. God the Father's) *glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power* ^e. *The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last* ^f. *The Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty* ^g.

THESE are the titles given to Christ in scripture, denoting his divine nature, his being every way equal with the Father, and eternally, essentially, immutably, and incomprehensibly one with him. These are titles and names given to Christ both in the Old and New Testament: and what are the more particular, and important instructions we are to learn from these, and the like names given to him, will be seen in the sequel.

As the above names (many of them especially) denote our Saviour's essential and proper divinity; so he sustains in the word of God one very great and important one which has a near relation to our nature as men; and

E 2

in

^a Matth. xi. 27. ^b Chap. xvi. 16, 17. ^c Isa. ix. 6.
^d Phil. ii. 6. ^e Heb. i. 3. ^f Rev. i. 8, 17.

in which our present safety, and our eternal happiness as sinners, capable of grace and salvation depends, this is that very great and well-known title of *Mediator*, so often found in the New Testament revelation; and referred to in the Old Testament prophecies very frequently, and abundantly.

SOME divines chuse to call this our Saviour's complex character, by which is understood his having two natures one altogether divine, (as in those above-mentioned) the other human, whereby he became one with us. *The word was made flesh and dwelt* amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth^a.*

IN these views does the gospel lay the foundation of the doctrine of free and sovereign grace, *Grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life^b. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich^c. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*
but

* He tabernacled amongst us, i. e. he abode with us on earth for a short season.

“ The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord
“ Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God,
“ became man,——by taking to himself a true body,
“ and a reasonable soul;——and so was and continues
“ to be God and man, in two distinct natures, and one
“ person for ever.” *Assemb. Catech.*

^a John i. 14. ^b Rom. v. 21. ^c 2 Cor. viii. 9.

but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross^a.

Now when we read the word *grace*, in these and in like scriptures, we ought still to keep in mind the perfect freedom of this favour, together with all, and every part of those blessings of salvation which the word of God reveals to us: salvation from sin, guilt, pollution, and misery, by the mediation of Christ, must needs be the perfectly free gift of God to sinners; otherwise it could not be, in our circumstances, a salvation suitable to us.

AND since, an infinitely wise and gracious God, well knows the innate pride, and haughtiness of carnal nature, he provides means accordingly: hence the Holy Ghost is sent, (previous to his being a comforter) to reprove of sin^b, that sinners may be humbled for it, repent of it, hate it, and forsake it; of righteousness, that, *despairing utterly of being justified by the deeds of the law, he may with all his heart and soul submit to the righteousness of God^c, that righteousness which is of Jesus Christ, and is received by faith, and is unto all, and upon all who believe, for herein there is no difference. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

E 3

THESE

^a Phil. ii. 6.^b John xvi. 8.^c See Rom.

chapters ii. iii. iv. x. and xi.

THESE things, being the special work of the Holy Spirit, in regeneration and effectual calling, make the way open for the setting forth the *unsearchable riches of Christ* to sinners. *In that day, when, looking unto Christ, whom they have pierced, they mourn to the very soul, for their sins; and are in bitterness, as one on the death of a first-born^a. Then, in that day, immediately is there a fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c^b. This seems to be the genuine language of the gospel. When Peter's hearers were pricked to the heart^c, and when the goaler said what must I do to be saved, the ready answer is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved^d.*

It appears highly necessary in the opening, and closing the way to such an important subject as this, *the preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ*, to begin here, or to premise such things as these; for, though the gospel be sent to all, and ministers are commanded to preach it to all who will hear it^e; nevertheless, till sinner's dead souls are quickened into spiritual life^f, till deaf ears are opened^g, stubborn wills subdued^h, stony hearts taken away, and hearts of flesh given in their roomⁱ. sinners neither can nor will hear to any purpose.

THESE

^a Zech. xii. 10. xii. 1. ^b Isa. lv. throughout.
^c Acts ii. 37. ^d Acts xvi. ^e Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.
 Mark xvi. 9. ^f Ephes. ii. 1. ^g Isa. xxxv. 5.
^h Psal. ciii. ⁱ Ezek. xx. 26,

THESE essential doctrines of grace which the ministers of the gospel may find so frequently in the sacred scriptures, written as in a plain broad hand, with a strong pen; these are the fountain head, from whence they may derive everlasting arguments of the freeness, the fulness, the suitableness; in a word the *immensity of the riches of Christ*.

SAINT Paul gives us a very full and instructive specimen of this kind. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.*

AND still the ground-work, upon which their treaty is built, and from whence all their arguments, intreaties, and perswasions proceed, is, *For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* *.

Now in all these, and in every of these in their use, what may be called unsearchable riches, and that in the fullest and most emphatical sense: in the merit of the blood of

E 4

Christ

* 2 Cor. v. 18.—21. Compare this with Isa. liii. 10. and this again with Chap. lv. throughout, and again, Chap. xlv. 20,—25. and many other places

Christ are riches unsearchable^a: in the complete perfection of Christ's obedience, to justify the ungodly, are riches unsearchable^b: in the fulness of his grace to sanctify and cleanse pure souls are riches unsearchable^c: in his power to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him are riches unsearchable^d: in his love, pity, grace, mercy, and compassion to lost sinners, and to weak tempted saints, are riches unsearchable^e.

AND what serves to illustrate the necessity, weight, and importance of the ministers of Christ holding forth the doctrines of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and abiding steadfast by them, is the great and constant opposition they may be sure to meet with, both from without and from within; satan and the world will constantly raise all possible opposition against them. *We* (saith Paul) *preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness^e*; but is this any just ground of discouragement? Truth is truth, whoever contradicts it, and if ever so few embrace it: and the success is certain in the end and issue, because *unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, be they ever so few, or ever so despicable it makes no odds here; unto these Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness*

^a Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. ^b Acts xx 22. ^c Rom. iii. 21, 31. ^d Heb. vii. 25. ^e 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. to the end of the chapter.

weakness of God is stronger than man: and moreover, not many rich, or noble (comparatively) are called; but contrarywise, the foolish things of this world hath God chosen to confound the wise, the weak to confound the mighty, the despised to bring to shame the carnally honourable, and finally things that seem to be nothing, to bring to nothing (in this contention) things that the mis-judging world thinks to be something of great weight and consequence; that no flesh should glory in his presence. Nor is this all: what conflicts do the people of God oftentimes find raised within? what a war in their own bosom, through the power of present darkness, renewed consciousness of sin, the workings of unbelief, misgiving apprehensions, and the strong temptations of Satan^a. Happy is it for the ministers of Christ, happy is it for the saints, that the weapons of this warfare are not carnal but mighty through God. Since they wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness in high places^b. Happy is it that the gospel abounds every where with so many exceeding great and precious promises^c, holding out in such a vast variety of the most agreeable, comforting, encouraging lights, the unsearchable riches of Christ, for the help and relief of humble penitent sinners! And though it is most just and equitable for us to judge, that, at most, we see but through a glass darkly, we know but

^a 2 Cor. x. 4.^b Ephes. vi. 12.^c 2 Pet. i. 9.

but *in part*, and preach *but in part*, being all liable to a degree of error and misapprehension, during this mortal life; yet, at the same time, as to the gospel, that blessed system of grace, it is every way full and complete, containing a balm for every wound, a cordial for every fear, a succour under every distress, help, encouragement, and assistance in every christian duty: nothing can be added to it, nothing can be taken from it without detriment and danger: so that whatever doctrine, or duty is preached, or taught, as a rule of judgment, or direction in practice, as detached from it, and unconnected with it, loses all its true life, power, and energy, in proportion to its distance. This word of grace is profitable, both for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*.

Prop. 2. ALL the qualifications of the ministers of Christ, that are peculiar to them as his ministers, and all their success in their ministrations, are all of grace. *Unto me is this grace given.*

THE word grace here means some promotion to an office or employment, of some note, dignity, or importance, so Paul judged, as is plain from his own words, *inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office, and again, I who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church* of

* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

of God. And here it ought to be remembered, that the true estimate of honour is usefulness. I now speak of men as reasonable intelligent beings, and as members of human society, that title or place of preferment which give no opportunity, or advantage, for greater usefulness among mankind, weighs nothing in the scale of true greatness.

ACCORDING to this rule, to be called and qualified with gifts and graces for the work of the ministry, must be grace, a favour given from Christ. All are not apostles, prophets, evangelists, &c. but all have in an orderly subordination, and at the same time a joint connection with the body of the catholic church his share of honour, in proportion to his usefulness^a.

AND here again, both the gifts bestowed, and the end for which these gifts are conferred, and which they are made to answer, both these serve to evince, that these are special favours from Christ, and such which none but himself can bestow and make successful. Here we are obliged to premise (in order to do justice to our subject) that whatever other qualifications ministers may be supposed to have, of regular learning, be it more or less, together with genius and eloquence in whatever degree, and allowing these of necessity[†], yet

^a Ephes. iv. 1,—14.

[†] I chuse here to distinguish between usefulness (or if you please great usefulness and necessity,) and again between necessity, and absolute necessity, which is by many

yet there are besides these such gifts and graces supposed, which only can come from Christ alone.

WE are not here speaking of regenerating and converting grace, for these are of absolute necessity to all who have no call to the ministry, *except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*; and, doubtless, these are absolutely needful for a true minister of Christ; but we enquire what are besides this the peculiar talents for the ministry? The gift seems to lie in a particular manner in a man's having an aptitude to understand the word of God, and to explain it in some degree properly and judiciously, and withal a talent of utterance or freedom of speech, as with proper words to convey the knowledge he has of the word of God to the edification of others.

THERE ought to be in a minister of the gospel a peculiar delight in reading, and studying the word of God above all other studies, and that with a special concern for the glory of Christ, and the good of souls. *I have* (saith David) *taken thy testimonies as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart*^a. These with an impressed sense of the value and preciousness of scripture truth, its sweetness

many much insisted on, which last term is not allowed here; and without it, I think (if the point were in debate) I have granted somewhat largely: and as to genius and eloquence, though schools may assist and improve them, yet are they the gifts of nature more strictly speaking, than acquisitions of art or mere labour.

^a Psal. cxix. 111.

ness and usefulness, serve to form a gospel minister, and prove both a blessing to himself and others.

I. THE thus calling a gospel minister, and endowing him with grace, proves a great blessing to his own soul. *The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits*^a, that having reaped the product of the season himself, he may be able to supply the wants of others. *Let the word of God dwell richly in you, in all wisdom*^b. This admonition which the apostle here gives the Colossians, being of such great use to them as private, or individual believers, or as promotive of their general usefulness as members of the church of Christ, must needs be so to the ministers of the gospel.

MINISTERS having their own souls deeply seasoned with the grace of the gospel, will furnish them from their own experience to direct, assist, and exhort others. *O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him*^c. *Knowing the terrors of the Lord we perswade men*^d. *The love of Christ constraineth us, &c.*

THUS in some good measure a gospel minister, while he himself grows in grace, and experience, though he cannot from himself communicate the grace he has unto others so as to make them gracious; yet, he is by this means

^a 2 Tim. ii. 6. ^b Colos. iii. 16. ^c Psal. xxxiv. 8.
^d 2 Cor. v. 11,—14.

means more adapted to help them with his own suitable experience, and to *comfort them with those comforts with which he himself hath been comforted of God* ^a.

2. THIS is a great blessing to those to whom they are sent. How cold, flat, and dead, must that recommendation of sacred truth be, which comes not from the heart and soul, but from the lip only? What comfort can any one hope to receive from one who preaches only what himself never feels; and speaks what himself never knew, any otherwise than by hearsay and by school-rules ^b?

BUT, on the other hand, what life and spirit, what unaffected zeal, and pathos, fervency and love, must mingle with that address where the spirit is full of the gospel, or as Elihu of old said, like bottles full of new wine. It was an excellent saying of an eminent divine, to young students in divinity, would you understand St. Paul's epistle, get St. Paul's spirit.

AND where this spirit is found in studying, and in preaching the gospel, it will deeply tincture and leaven the whole of the minister's spirit and conversation; his prayers, his private visits of his friends, and, in a word, it will in a sort, and in a degree, change the whole man into the image of the gospel, which is the reflection of the glorious image of

^a 2 Cor. i. 4.

^b Chap. ii. throughout

of Christ ^a. *He will* be willing to watch for souls, as one that must give an account, that he may do it with joy ^b.

FROM these hints may be seen, in some small measure, how grace is bestowed upon churches and families, and on particular souls, by means of such grace bestowed upon ministers.

IN these are seen the image of Christ in miniature. In the bosom of these glows the same spirit of love, pity, and compassion for precious souls, in their tender and melting affections are felt in sympathy the bowels of the Lord Jesus.

ST. Peter considers every true christian according to his gifts and talents bestowed upon him, as bound to minister to his fellow-christians, *as a steward of the manifold grace of God* ^c: and the argument concludes very strongly, since he is redeemed from his vain conversation with no less price than the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot; this being allowed, his body, and soul, his life, his all, is Christ's; and it will follow, that all the talents he receives, and all the mercies he enjoys through life, are not so much his own as they are Christ's, who laid down his life as a ransom for him, and he at most, but a steward of this manifold grace of God; or the mercy of God in his salvation, set forth and displayed in a manifold way and manner, which he

^a 2 Cor. iii. 12. ^b Heb. xiii. 17. ^c 1 Pet. iv. 10.

he is called by providence to use to the best advantage, for the good of his fellow-christians and fellow-creatures.

To this may be added the words of St. Paul, which will appear upon the whole but a greater degree of the same thing, or a farther enhancement of the argument. *Let men so account of us (saith he) as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful^a.*

A STEWARDSHIP is a trust of much consequence, in most cases, and still in proportion to the value of what is committed to their care; and consequently his faithfulness and truth are deeply engaged in his undertaking.

To the ministers of the everlasting gospel, are committed *the unsearchable riches of Christ*. In this view, and under this character, they have nothing of their own, but are only servants employed under the great lord and master of servants, who gives his talents out of his own sovereign pleasure, to one after this manner and degree, to another after that manner and degree; and taking in here that of St. Peter, (before mentioned) the ministers of the gospel are no more than upper stewards of the whole family, or community to which they belong[†].

ALL these thoughts being put together will teach us, that the ministers of Christ are not made

^a 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

[†] The word *Episcopos*, Acts xx. 28. seems to be faithfully translated here overseers.

made public persons, or sustain this public character, but for others spiritual good and advantage, so far as is within their power; their whole stock of experience is a part of the church stock, as well as their knowledge of the word of God; and their gift of utterance; all their soul exercises; their very trials and temptations are for others good, that when they are recovered, restored, and brought out of darkness and the shadow of death, to the light of life, *they may strengthen their brethren*^a. Their joys, their enlargements, their consolations, are not to be cloistered up, or buried in obscurity, but, in proper time and place, are to be made use of for the good of the whole: In a word, whatever cross or trial, affliction or deliverance, through life, is made of spiritual use, and a blessing to the one, is for the good of the other; and that these, *through the thanksgiving of many, may redound to the glory of God*^b.

THE apostle of the Gentiles in his epistles to the Corinthians, dwells much on this subject; and, as it were, with a sudden transport of soul, ends one of these relations of his own trials with a strong and bold acclamation. *Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by and in every place. For we are, unto God, a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are a savour of death unto death; and to the*

F
other

^a Luke xxii. 31, 32.

^b 2 Cor. iv. 15.

other the savour of life unto life, and who is sufficient for these things?

Prop. 3. A just sense of the greatness, and importance of this work will produce sincere humility.

HUMILITY is the natural production of sincere grace, and, according to its measure, one of the best evidences of it in its power^b. What more natural, what more just than the reasonings, *Who maketh thee to differ, and what hast thou which thou hast not received*^c. If salvation be all of grace^a, and if it naturally produces humility, then the more grace any one receives, the more humble he will be, and whatever it may be, or whatever name it may bear that has a contrary tendency, it is no grace, nor any part of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the souls of men.

THE whole current of the bible is to level the pride of men, and that the Lord alone may be exalted in the salvation of sinners.

FROM this principle it also follows, that whatever gifts or whatever knowledge any man may receive, or be his place in the church ever so high, the true estimate of him is not to be taken from his gifts and promotion, but from his sincere grace, piety, and humility; for we are not here treating of men merely as men; or what they may deserve of honour, and what respect they may command from others on the account of their superior station.

^a 2 Cor. i. and Chap. ii. throughout. ^b 1 Pet. v. 5.
^c 1 Cor. iv. 7. ^d Eph. ii. 8.

station, their parts, their learning, or the like, Honour to whom honour, &c.² but grace is now our subject, with its genuine effects on the souls of the true ministers of Christ.

How exceedingly different is the true spirit of the gospel from the spirit of the world! Light and darkness are not more contrary. What a surprising change does grace make in all, if its effects are truly felt, and its true nature understood! how unlike to each other Saul the Pharisee and Paul the apostle of the Gentiles! *What things were gain to me, those, I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law*, and when he came to Corinth, he came there with a full determination, whatever he might know besides, or whatever use he might have for his great talents of erudition at other times, or on other occasions, yet among them he would not seem to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and his reason was, that their faith might not so much as seem to stand*

F 2

* Rom. xiii. 5. 1 Cor. ix. 10, &c.

* Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. What a solemn renunciation is here of all things, and every thing that you can name when compared with Christ? *Yea doubtless*, it may be is as much as we contain in our translation, the full energy seeming hardly to be expressed in any language but his own.

in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

AND we find him still of the same mind when writing to the Galatians, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom I am crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto me, Chap. vi. 14.

WHAT shall I say on this head. This is what one justly calls *a crucified glory*: this is the true spirit of the gospel which melts down the whole soul, and transforms every power and every passion of the whole man into the lively image of the blessed Son of God. *Moreover, whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren^a.*

ALL ministers are not equal either in gifts or grace, nor was it ever so in the best of times, *though* (saith Paul) *ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet ye have not many fathers^b*: nevertheless, those who are the true ministers of Christ have, one and all, more or less, the same spirit; preach one and the same Saviour; *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth^c*: all derive the same grace from his infinite fulness^d, even grace for grace; all direct their aims, their ends, their views, to his honour and glory, and in this respect all drink into the same spirit,

^a Rom. viii. 29. ^b 1 Cor. iv. 15. ^c Rom. x. 4.
^d Matt. xxiii. 16, — 19.

rit, walk by the same rule, (the word of God) and live upon one and the same blessed gospel.

IN the old jewish law, under that temporary dispensation, the holy temple sanctified every golden vessel of whatever size, or for whatever use made; and the holy altar sanctified every gift, and every offering brought before it, or laid upon it^a; so this spirit of grace sanctifies and devotes every gift and every talent, great and small, more or less, natural or acquired, genius, elocution, tongues; even the whole circle of the sciences to the honour and interest of the ever blessed redeemer.

CONSIDERING things in this gospel light, there is a firm foundation laid for the peace and prosperity of gospel churches, which when built up of living stones, and continuing still in gospel-order, are called *the glory of Christ*^b. *This charity, this love to Christ, his cause, his gospel, his ways, his ordinances, his churches, his people, never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. Now we know in part, and prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away*^c. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth^d, and what the apostle means by each the two next verses will explain.

F 3

By

^a Matt. xxiii. 16,—19,

^b 2 Cor. viii. 23.

^c 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 9, 10.

^d 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2, 3.

By knowledge he means graceless, unsanctified knowledge, *If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know*: "If a man thinks he knows every thing; or indeed if he thinks he knows any thing that is knowable, in its full latitude, extent, and dependencies, effects, and consequences, he indeed knows nothing at all yet as he ought to know it; and himself least of all *."

No need to enquire whether St. Paul means *natural or acquired knowledge*, for if they are unsanctified, one or the other, or both, all will come to one and the same end; for it is often seen that a man is as proud and conceited that he can do without learning, as another is or can be that he has it.

On the other hand he shews what he means by *edifying charity*. *If any man love God, the same is known, i. e. approved of him.*

THIS love of God we have elsewhere explained, as to its rise and spring, and as to its effect and operation. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*^a.

It is this love of God shed abroad in their heart by the Holy Ghost, given to them^b, which is the living spring and movement of ministers souls, by which they are at first incited to preach

* I do not insist upon this as the precise meaning of the text, nevertheless there is some truth in it.

^a 1 John iv. 9, 10, 11. ^b Rom. v. 7.

preach the gospel, by which they are kept on in it, and from whence they persevere and persist in it, to the last end of life.

From these things may be formed in some measure a judgment of a man's call to the ministry, even by his love to God, and souls, and his having proper gifts, and a providential call accordingly.

To this may be added, that in process of time, minister's trials and temptations serve to brighten both their gifts and their graces; but especially their graces; and it is often found that when God has any singular work to do by his ministering servants, that they have their great exercises one way or other previous thereto. Possibly it was this that might occasion the saying of Luther. *Meditation, prayer, and temptation make a minister of the gospel.* Thus (like diamonds kept long under the file) they brighten not only for the pulpit, but in their spirit, in their tempers, and in their christian conversation; while, on the contrary, unmortified unruly passions, and a too great degree of a worldly temper, where they do not utterly spoil, they exceedingly tarnish the ministerial character.

Who so fit to bear an important commission in the army as one trained up, and long experienced in military hardships? So writes aged Paul to young Timothy. *Thou therefore my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou*

to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou, therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ^a. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath appointed him to be a soldier. Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

WHAT I have more to add, to the notes already given, on St. Paul's great humility, in here calling himself *less than the least of all saints*, is, that this precious grace of humility is not confined to the apostolic, or to the ministerial character: what spirit the apostle here discovers he does accumulate to himself; but frequently he joins others with himself in the very same account of his sufferings. *Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place. And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled we bless; being persecuted we suffer it: being defamed we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day. I write not these things to shame you; but as my beloved sons I warn you.—Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me^b.*

AND long since the apostle's time, the martyrs, confessors, and christians possessed the same spirit of christian meekness, patience, and humility: and low as the true spirit of christianity, may seem to be at this day with many professing godliness; nevertheless, this spirit of
humility,

^a 2 Tim. ii. 1,—5.

^b 1 Cor. iv. 11,—14.

humility, this mortified spirit, this weanedness from the world, this Christ exalting free-grace, exalting spirit, is not extinct, or quite vanished from the world.

THERE is something in the very nature of grace, so simply, so sincerely, and so disinterestedly aiming at the glory of God, that nothing merely natural can compare with it. *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise*^a. And how should the people of God (his church) shew forth his praise: how can they possibly do it any other way, but by serving Christ with his own gifts, and glorifying him with his own graces? So that it is only changing the persons for things, and the sense is still the same. These graces of my people have I formed for myself, and in their trial, the growth, and final perfection, they shall shew forth my praise.

BUT as this heaven-born grace, humility, is the particular point before us, according to our text, as the Holy Spirit is alone the author of it and agent in it, and as Christ is above all to be magnified and to be glorified by it; it may well be said by the apostle Peter, *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, is in the sight of God of great price*^b. In one word, this christian humility, this lowliness of mind before God, is the very purest part, the very essence of evangelical repentance, inasmuch as thereby the soul is more and more defeated from the impure dregs of self-interest, self-

^a Isa. xliii. 21.

^b 1 Pet. iii. 4.

self-seeking, self-love, and self-righteousness; and by this means the sanctified and renewed soul, is by repeated and renewed acts of faith, love, and self-resignation, is continually pouring out its own will into the all-disposing will of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THESE are some of my more settled and digested sentiments of the grace of humility, which in its original rises from the implanted love of God, in its progress it is the manifested love of God through Christ, shed abroad in the heart by the holy Ghost given to the saints; and in the issue it settles and centers in God alone, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right-hand are pleasures for evermore.

USE the FIRST:

1st. If the setting forth the unsearchable riches of Christ be the substance of gospel-preaching; then a due and daily exercise of faith in Christ is the main end of a christian's living.

Two things serve to make up the christian character; so far as he thinks, and acts, and lives, according to his profession he lives by faith on gospel promises, and he walks in faith by a gospel rule. The gospel of the free grace of God the father, in and through Christ the only mediator and redeemer, is but one uniform system in all the parts and branches of it. It cannot (by any just measure) be new modeled

modeled or moulded, bowed or bent to suit the fashion of the age; and as there can be but one right way of believing, so there can be but one right way of living to the glory of God, through Christ, unto spiritual edification and comfort. St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians, ends somewhat abrupt and positive in respect to these two articles; and, doubtless, considering his subject, and who he wrote to, he saw reason for it. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,——For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me.——The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, amen^a.*

AND as the revelation of the divine purpose which lay hid in God, even the good pleasure of his will, for the salvation of his church, by Jesus Christ, lies all within the circle of the holy oracles; so all experimental religion is but a brought home, and applied gospel in the various branches of it, suiting the unhappy condition of a lost sinner: our gospel came to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance^b, and as to practical religion, it has all its light, life, power, efficacy, and energy, from the same blessed fountain. *Do we make void the law*

^a Gal. vi. to the end.

^b 1 Theff. i. 5.

law through faith? God forbid, yea we establish the law^a.

THUS both the duties of the *moral law*, and the *institutions of the gospel*, are all sanctified and blessed to spiritual edification, through the grace of the Holy Spirit; and thus all practical christianity ends in this one point, an humble waiting upon God, by faith in prayer, and in every other commanded duty, in hope that God, will of his most free, and abundant grace, do that for us, and work that in us which we cannot do ourselves^b.

USE the SECOND.

IF all the gifts and graces of gospel ministers (properly so called) are from Christ^c, from hence we are taught from whence both ministers and hearers are to expect the divine blessing, as to the success of the public ministration of the word.

IF all the gifts and graces, which properly form the ministerial character, are from Christ, it will follow by just consequence, that Christ expects to have all the glory in the calling, converting, strengthening, and establishing souls; this glory Christ will not give to any other, nor will true faith desire it should be so.

IF you see the glory of free grace in the gospel you hear or read, you will see the glory of Christ in the gifts and graces of those ministers

^a Rom. iii. 31.

^b Phil. ii. 12. 13.

^c Eph. iv. 8,—16.

ministers whom he qualifies, and sends forth to preach the gospel; and, furthermore, by the same rule, and for the same reason, you will see the glory of Christ in all the life, light, strength, and comfort you receive from them: and that even Paul or Apollos themselves if they were now living, or were there any ministers now in being equal to them in talents, gifts, and usefulness, they would be no more to you than ministers, i. e. servants of Christ by whom you believe^a.

THE contrary spirit and temper St. Paul found exceeding detrimental to the once flourishing church of Corinth, and he much censures their conduct herein; are ye not carnal and walk as men^b?

AND to the same unequal temper has been owing, in all succeeding ages, the divisions and animosities, and in the end, the utter ruin of many famous churches: an idolizing humour on the one hand, and a depreciating one on the other, cannot but be attended with almost innumerable evil and pernicious consequences*. Happy for that

* 1 Cor. iii. 5.

^b Ver. 3.

* The apostle found the hurt of this both ways at different times, and in different places, and as these were under the strong impetus of contrary passions, &c. ye know how thro' infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel to you at the first, and my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness you spoke of, I bear you record, that if it had been

that christian, happy for that minister whose spirit is in some measure borne above such low influences. Paul purposing a journey to Rome, professeth with a steady faith, when I come unto you, I am sure I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ; and at the same time, as awfully mindful of what was both their great interest, and their indispensable duty he immediately subjoins, Now, I beseech you brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. Rom. xv. 30, 31.

USE the THIRD.

If these divine favours given to gospel ministers, are to the souls who have them of a humbling nature, we may in some sort form a judgment of what real spiritual use and benefit the ministry any one sits under is to him.

DOUBTLESS, there may be more than one mark or evidence given, of spiritual profiting under the word, but this one now lies directly before us.

THE entrance of the word giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple^a. It is one singular effect of this divine knowledge, and by which it stands distinguished from every

been possible ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? Gal. iv. 12, 15.

^a Psal. cxix. 130.

every human science; it giveth at its very first entrance into the soul, a gradual, and growing display of the vileness and depravity of human nature: nor does this terminate, at the sinner's first conversion, when he was first turned from darkness to light, and from Satan to God; but still it improves and heightens these first discoveries.

Does the infinite purity of the divine nature, shining forth in the bloody sufferings of the blessed Redeemer, whose *soul was made an offering for sin*^a; being delivered, *the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God*^b; do these discoveries imprint a deep sense of thy own guilt and vileness upon thy soul, and make thee utterly despair of ever obtaining the favour of God any other way, but through the infinite merit and mediation of Christ? Do these discoveries throw down more and more every high thought, and captivate thy whole soul to the obedience of faith? through a revealed gospel making thee to be joyfully willing to be nothing, and less than nothing in thy own sight, that Christ may be all in all; and that even after a whole life spent in the service, and for the honour of Christ, thou art of thyself no more nor better than an unprofitable, a weak and unworthy sinner?

FINALLY, do thy pleasures under, or by the word, rise from the view thou art (sometimes more especially) enabled to take of the immense glory, which rises unto the free-
grace

^a Isa. liii. 10.

^b 1 Pet. iii. 18.

grace of God in the salvation Christ has alone wrought out for thee; *and that where sin hath abounded, there did grace much more abound; and though the wages of sin is death; and as a sinner thou dost most righteously deserve it, yet the free gift of God is eternal life, through the Lord Jesus Christ?* Such sentiments may assist in forming some degree of judgment, of profiting under the word of the gospel: do not your dead duties, and barren frames, send you to a throne of grace, in hopes still, notwithstanding your daily sin and unworthiness, that you shall obtain mercy, and find grace to help you in every time of need? Then do you indeed, upon the whole, profit under the gospel; although you cannot always comfortably see it.

* Rom. v. 23.

S E R

never have entered into the thought of creating beings without a divine and supernatural

conduct of himself, and the only worthy

of God to give, and in the clearest light

and adorned with the most powerful motives

S E R M O N III.

An Exhortation given at the
Settlement of the Church of
Christ, at Lockerley in Hamp-
shire, 1753.

PHIL. i. 27.

*Only let your conversation be as becometh
the gospel of Christ—*

WITHOUT controversy, great is the
mystery of godliness^a: It is so in all
the various parts and branches of it,
in all that it teaches, and in all its operati-
ons; in the light it conveys to the weak and
depraved human mind, and the commanding
power it hath upon the will and affections of
regenerate souls: the gospel contains such
sublime and heavenly doctrines, which could

G never

^a 1 Tim. iii. 16.

never have entered into the thought of created beings, without a divine and supernatural revelation: it gives such holy rules for the conduct of human life, that are truly worthy of God to give, and of all reasonable creatures to obey; and these set in the clearest light, and enforced with the most powerful motives that can be thought of.

AND since the sublimest discoveries, the most perfect rules, together with the most conclusive arguments, the most powerful motives, and the most pathetic exhortations will be ineffectual without supernatural grace given from above, all these are contained in the gospel of Christ; and hence is Christ said to be not only the wisdom but the power of God^a, and the gospel in his hand as mediator, is the power of God unto salvation^b: of these things I purpose to treat briefly, according to the tenor of the text before us, and suitable to the present occasion.

THE apostle Paul observes, as a general rule, in his epistles to the Gentile churches*, still to lay a firm foundation for practical piety on the doctrines of the gospel; on this (towards the conclusion) he raises a noble superstructure, containing a most valuable collection

^a 1 Cor. i. 24.

^b Rom. i. 16.

* I mention *Gentile churches*, because in the epistles to the Hebrews, (supposed to be his) that method of reserving the practical part to the last is not, as elsewhere observed, but interwoven with the various parts of the doctrine of Christ's priesthood, founded on his divinity and sacrifice.

lection of the most necessary and important duties, necessary and useful in every part of the christian life, public, or private, and suitable to all ranks and degrees of men; and these urged with the most powerful arguments and motives that can be thought of: as for instance, writing to the Romans, having in eleven chapters finished his argument for the free justification of sinners, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto them, and as received by faith, he begins chap. xii, *I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, &c.*

THE holiness of the saints is the end of their election, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

HOLINESS is the end of their redemption. These are redeemed from their vain conversation—with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. It is the end of their remission. There is forgiveness with God that he may be feared. It is the end of their vocation. As he that calleth them is holy, so ought they to be holy, in all manner of conversation. Be ye holy, for I am holy. It is the end of public worship, and of all divine ordinances. Holiness becometh the house

G 2

^a 1 Pet. i. 18. ^b Psal. cxxx. 4. ^c 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

of God for ever^a. It is the full perfection of happiness in heaven. *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness^b*. It is the final and ultimate end of Christ's mediation. *That he might sanctify and cleanse his church, by the washing of water by the word, and that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish^c*. All the work of the Holy Spirit terminates here, and hence is he called the *Holy Spirit*. In a word, if the soul be made holy it cannot but be happy; if it remain unholy and impure, it cannot but be miserable, *For without holiness no man shall see the Lord^d*.

THIS epistle was wrote to the Philippians when Paul was a prisoner at Rome, on the account of the gospel of Christ, and the main design of it is to encourage these believing Philippians, and to strengthen and confirm them in the profession of their faith, and this he doth in this chapter, from several considerations.

1st, From the perswasions he had in his own mind, that, through the all-powerful grace of God, they should hold out in their christian course, and persevere therein to the end: Ver. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.*

2^{dly}.

^a Psal. xciii. 5. ^b Psal. xvii. 15. ^c Eph. v. 26, 27.
^d Heb. xii. 14.

2dly. He gives them to understand, that they ought by no means to be discouraged upon the account of his deep sufferings for the cause of Christ, since (through the overruling power of God, who worketh all things according to the council of his own will) his imprisonment at Rome, had been blessed for the promotion and furtherance of the gospel. Ver. 12, 13, 14.

3dly. He expresseth so affectionate a concern for the welfare of their souls, that it seemed a matter of question which to chuse, whether to continue in the flesh for their edification and building up in holiness, and for the general good of the churches of Christ, or whether he should be more willing to depart and to be with Christ in heaven; though, as to the thing itself, he could not but know, that to depart and to be with Christ must be far better for himself; nevertheless, to continue in the flesh a while longer, seemed more expedient, i. e. might be very serviceable for their spiritual edification and comfort. See this most pathetically represented from ver. 20 to 24. —

4thly, He tells them he had an inward persuasion that he should continue, at least, some time longer; which could not but be a great comfort to them, ver. 25, 26, But,

5thly. Since the particular leadings of providence, with respect to himself were unknown, so that he could not be certain how long he should abide with them, or be absent from

them, this he desires and insists upon, as the whole substance of his present request and wish, that their conversation might be as became the gospel of Christ *.

THE apostle knew his being present with them might be a comfort to them, and his being long detained from them would be their very great concern, and the cause of uneasiness; but at the same time, his being present with them could not be of such absolute necessity, as that they could not do without him; who, he hopes, while at a distance to hear from them, and that their conduct would appear to be such as became the christian name, and that, as he expresses it, *holding the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, they might stand fast in one spirit, and one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

WHEN he here signifies his willingness to abide some time longer for their edification, he has no such notion of his continuance in life, as though the cause of Christ could not do without him in the world: this he utterly disowns: *I suffer as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound*^a. q. d.

“ Though I am bound; yet the word of God “ is

* This the apostle presses again upon them with great earnestness, Chap. iii. 15,—20. Some walk of whom I tell you, even weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ, &c.—But our conversation is in heaven.

^a 2 Tim. ii. 9.

“is free, and can obtain free course, and can be glorified without my assistance.”

THIS exhortation I shall endeavour to explain, and improve as follows.

1st. I SHALL shew the import of the word conversation in our text, and what may be the apostle's meaning in it.

2^{dly}. I SHALL endeavour to shew what things appear, from the word of God, to be needful, in order to influence and direct a true gospel-conversation.

3^{dly}, POINT out some of those duties toward God, ourselves, the church of God, and the world, which pertain to a gospel-conversation; and may serve, not only to shew that it is a just and sincere conversation, but an honourable and amiable one.

4^{thly}. ENFORCE the foregoing things recommended, by pointing out, in two, or three particulars, the emphasis of the word *only* in our text. *Only* let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ.

FIRST I shall shew the import of the word conversation, and what we may suppose the apostle, here, intends by it.

THE word conversation is a word in common use, and well known among men. Thus we say, such a man is one of a *sober life and conversation*, by which we mean one of an honest life and character. *The wicked have drawn out the sword, and bent the bow to slay such as be of upright conversation*^a.

G 4

ON

^a Psal. xxxvii. 14.

ON the other hand, a wicked and licentious life, is called a filthy conversation, *Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked*^a, i. e. the men of Sodom.

L E T your conversation be without covetousness^b, q. d, "Let none of your conduct discover a covetous disposition."

O U R rejoicing is this (saith St. Paul) the testimony of our conscience, that with simplicity, and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world; not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, &c.^c i. e. free from all mean and sordid views whatever.

IN the text the word *conversation* seems to be more strict and particular, and hence the continuers of Poole's Annotations, have well noted, that the word "imports to have their deportment answerable to their citizenship, and that they should behave as might be most for the good of the society to which they did belong." The like word we have Chap. iii. 20. *our conversation* (our citizenship) *is in heaven*. The apostle here sets the true spiritual conversation of christians in direct opposition to the carnal and dishonourable conversation of many, ver. 19. many walk of whom I have often told you, and now tell you, even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

IT

^a 2 Pet. ii. 7. ^b Heb. xiii. 5. ^c 2 Cor. i. 12,

It is expected, that persons born and bred up in rich and populous cities, persons bred and educated among merchants, and amidst the more profitable and genteel employments of life, that these should conduct themselves with a dignity, and elevation of mind worthy of their station: so St. Paul pathetically exhorts the Ephesians, *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-sufferings, forbearing one another in love, &c.* and urging this by his own example, Chap. iii. 14. he after the manner, almost peculiar to himself, crowding his epithets together, calls it *the mark,—the prize,—the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*; and concludes Chap. iv. 8. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

SECONDLY, we are to consider what things appear, from the word of God, to be needful in order both to influence and to direct a truly gospel-conversation.

FIRST, A gospel-conversation must be formed upon gospel-principle, and these are of two sorts.

1st. Such as serve to direct the judgment.

2dly. Such as influence the will, and impress

^a Ephes. iv, 1, 2.

press the passions and affections, such as love, fear, duty, zeal, reverence, &c.

FIRST, such as serve to inform the judgment; some of these, inclusive of more, are found. Heb. vi. 1, 2. and are expressly called the principles of the doctrine of Christ*. Such as *repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.* Some of these may, by way of emphasis, be called essentially necessary to salvation; by which I would be understood to mean what the scripture doth, when it saith, *except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; and again, without faith it is impossible to please God.* Then hath God granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, and as repentance and faith are essential to salvation, so is the doctrine of baptism as essential to church-fellowship, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Acts ii. 38—41. iii. 36—39. and the professing of both faith and repentance, previous to baptism, as essential to church-order and the communion of saints†.

AGAIN

* The word of the beginning of Christ, *as in the margin.*

† In the year 1758, A small piece, on the account of Lockerley church, entituled a brief and faithful narrative, &c. was printed, as drawn up from my papers, by my reverend friend and brother, mr. Daniel Turner of Abingdon, in which are these words. “ A house being licensed for the
“ purpose

AGAIN, besides the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment, which fixes finally, and for ever, the state of all mankind; to these may be added, the doctrine of the proper deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of Christ's proper surety-ship, and the atonement he hath made for sin, by the sacrifice he hath once made of himself, bearing the sins of many in his own body on the tree: pardon obtained through the merit of his blood, and justification, through the imputation of his perfect obedience unto us; the advocateship, and intercession of Christ in heaven, the infallible operation of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men in regeneration, and saving conversion, together with the doctrine of the final, and certain perseverance of the saints, unto eternal life; some degree of light into, and knowledge of these things, and a sincere belief of them, are needful in order to guide and direct a gospel-conversation; though what degree

“ purpose of preaching, the consequence was that sixteen of them were baptized at one time, upon a profession of their faith, &c. in the presence of a large congregation, at Broughton, a village in Hampshire, with the assistance of mr. Steele, pastor of the baptist church there.” page 10.

Therefore the reason why no more was said above on the subject of adult baptism, was because a very sensible and judicious sermon, on that subject, was preached to them on Acts viii. 36. at the time above-mentioned, by mr. Steele, which made my farther insisting on the subject not needful to them at that time.

gree of distinct light and knowledge into these things; (allowing for the manifold impediments and disadvantages which multitudes live and die under) and how far it is absolutely needful all should agree, is exceeding difficult, if not quite impossible for any one to determine. Secret things belong unto the Lord, not to us.

BUT as to the more circumstantial part of things, and as to certain modes of explanation, not affecting the essence of any doctrine; while men ought faithfully to follow their own light, so far as taken from the word of God, let them be kindly affectionate to them who differ from them. *As many as are perfect, i. e. (such who judge themselves to be tolerably established in the essentials of doctrinal and of practical religion) let such walk by the same rule (i. e. what they profess to make their rule, and let them mind the same thing;)* but at the same time, let them by no means neglect the sequel, *that wherein any are otherwise minded, to pray conscientiously, and charitably, that God would reveal even this unto them,* Chap. iii. 16.

SECONDLY, A gospel conversation must be a conversation animated, and influenced by a divine and internal principle of infused, or implanted grace.

THIS doctrine our Lord taught his disciples. *That the tree must be made good before the fruit can be good.* And this metaphor is most agreeable to the very nature and reason of
of

of things; but then this must also be allowed, that, according to the more plain and express letter of the word of God, the whole nature of man, body, and soul, with every power and faculty, are by original sin totally depraved and corrupted; what less than this can such scriptures mean? *every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil, and that continually the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*†.

THERE is none righteous, no not one^a.

If the doctrine of original sin, were here our set subject, and the argument followed by a scripture light, it would end in this, an altogether dissimilitude or unlikeness to God^b, a total alienation from him^c, which two seem to contain the sum total of moral depravity and pollution ‡.

ALL confess, who believe a God, that he is the highest and chief good; now *God is love*^d; therefore since *the carnal* (i. e. the ungenerate,

† Gen. vi. 5. Chap. viii. 21. The whole imagination. The Hebrew word signifieth, not only the imagination, but also the purposes and desires, see the margin.

^a Rom. iii. 10—20. ^b Psal. xiv. 1, 2, 3. ^c Rom. viii. 7, 8.

‡ The doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, by the fall of Adam, is believed but by few comparatively; is absolutely denied and contradicted by many; but as there are so many strong testimonies for it in scripture, I chuse to leave them as they stand, in their full force; and to speak out their full meaning.

^d 1 John iv. 8, 9, 10.

generate, the unrenewed mind) is enmity against God; not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, then enmity to God, the chief good, must be the fountain and spring of all evil; and as enmity against God is the very depth of human depravity; so, in love to God, delight in God, his laws, his ways, his word, his will, his ordinances, his people, begins all true religion, both in heart and life; and here also we are to remember, *herein is love manifested, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us, and gave his son to be a propitiation for our sins.* And this spring of divine love in God, which is the sole cause and movement of ours to him, begins to dilate and display itself in its first effects on the soul of man in regeneration. *God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace are ye saved*^a.

If any man therefore endeavours to build the superstructure of a holy life, without laying the foundation in regenerating, and renewing grace, as flowing from union with Christ, by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, he does but build an house upon the sand^b. If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his, *since it is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Only that makes sinners free from the law of sin and death*^c.

How

^a Eph. ii. 4, 5.

^b Matt. vii. 26, 27.

^c Rom. viii. 2—9.

How vain and dangerous must it then be for any one one, to attempt to rely upon a mere form of christianity, without the living power; an empty shadowy holiness, which like Ephraim's empty vine bringeth fruit only to itself; none to the glory of God as the God of grace, none to its own spiritual true edification, like the foolish virgins, having only a lamp and no oil^a.

SECONDLY a gospel conversation must be supported and maintained by gospel strength.

CHRIST is, in scripture, represented as the *Lord, the strength* of his people^b, as well as the *Lord their righteousness*, and inasmuch as *he is all in all* to them in all other things, respecting grace and salvation, so he is all in all to them in point of aid and assistance.

It was when they were without strength, that Christ died for them; and it was when they were without strength, or life, that he by his Holy Spirit quickened them. It was his own arm that brought home, even his own salvation to their souls, which he had before, by his obedience and death wrought out for them.

AND ever since the happy hour of their regeneration, they hold their spiritual life, by virtue of strength derived from him. The life I live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me, and given himself for me^c.

SUCH

^a Matt. xxv. ^b Isa. xii. 2, Jer. xxiii. 6. Psal. cxviii. 14. ^c Gal. ii. 20. John xv. throughout

Such is the wise method which God takes in the dispensation of his grace, as that every believer shall be placed in such a station, and in such a situation in life, as that he shall be held in a constant dependance upon Christ, for new and constant supplies of spiritual ability, strength, life, and vigour every day, and for every duty; for the improvement of every mercy, for the enjoyment of every blessing, for the bearing every cross, for the undertaking and executing every new design, and every new business in life; that so he may be able in some measure to answer the will of God in every call of his providence; for (as one well says) every providence has a call of God in it; and every call of providence has in the believer, some grace to answer it †: and for the new trial and exercise of every grace, there will need new supplies of light, wisdom, strength, and assistance, *bodily exercise profiteth little*^a: if bodily exercise were the whole of religion, bodily strength would do; or if mere moral fortitude would do, then mere moral perswasion would be sufficient to determine the will to it; but since *God is a spirit, and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*; and since *such he seeketh to worship him*^b: nothing short of spiritual strength given from the God of all grace, will be sufficient to serve acceptably an infinitely holy and good God.

OF

† Polhill's Precious Faith.

^a 1 Tim. iv. 8.^b John iv. 23, 24.

Of this David seems exceeding sensible, as is evident from his great earnestness and solicitude, so often expressed: *My soul followeth hard after God^a, thy right-hand boldeth me^a. Uphold my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not, &c.* And these divine breathings of soul, are under-propt with suitable promises. *Fear not for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee by the right-hand of my righteousness^b.* These will need equal grace and strength for an upright godly conversation; as for gospel-worship, since to guard against temptations from without, and against evil inclinations within, the soul must still be kept watchful and wakeful, conscientious, and prayerful against temptation. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me (i. e. any latent, lurking, unseen, undiscovered, vicious inclinations) and lead me in the way everlasting^c.*

To these considerations might be added, an awful regard to the all-seeing eye of God, as being in a peculiar manner, upon all the ways and actions of his professing people: the zeal which should continually animate their souls, in the cause of God and religion, the constant steadiness and resolution which are so absolutely needful, in order to an upright, uniform,

^a Psal. lxiii. 8.^a Psal. xvii. 5.^b Isa. xli. 10.^c Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

uniform, gospel-conversation ; all these will sufficiently argue the absolute need of daily and constant supplies of grace and strength given from above, to humble independent sincere souls. *The Lord resisteth the proud ; but he giveth grace unto the humble*^a.

THIRDLY, a gospel-conversation must be according to gospel-rule, in all the parts and branches of it ; so far as light into the word of God extends.

It ought not to be thought sufficient for those professing godliness, to content themselves with a general profession, that they take the word of God for their rule ; but it should be looked to that they have a reverential regard to it in all their undertakings. The word of God is of use to form the whole conduct of a christian, so that, in no one duty, or station in life, is he left to himself, so as to call himself his own, or that he may act as he himself pleases : *Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify the Lord with your bodies, and with your spirits which are his*^b. No man (i. e. no christian man) liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord ; whether, therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both

^a James v. 5.

^b 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

both of the dead and living^a. The meaning is,
 “ No true christian man can, or ought to be
 “ an end unto himself; or to make his own
 “ ease, pleasure, or profit, the final end of
 “ his actions; but the glory of God, and the
 “ good of others, in body, and soul, and life,
 “ so far as is within his power; and as is
 “ consistent with the duty he owes to him-
 “ self.”

BUT as this particular relates to another head, I dismiss it, as being rather a digression from my main point. I have only to note here, as an introduction to the next head, that the word of God is not only to be considered as a rule for divine worship, but as a directory of the christian life; and in that, not only to form or regulate the more outward manners and decorum, but also, at the same time, to shew how the mind ought to be engaged, in the practice both of the christian virtues and the christian graces.

THIS illustration also belongs to another head more properly.

FOURTHLY, a gospel conversation must be animated and inspired by gospel-motives.

It is readily allowed, that all reasonable and just motives, and arguments, ought to be used, in order to stir up and excite persons to a holy life and behaviour; and amongst other considerations, it may justly be insisted on, that true rectitude of life and manners, sound probity and truth, together with candor and

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bene-

^a Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9.

benevolence, are the real ornaments and dignity of human nature, simply considered, and in a light abstracted from christianity, properly so called: these are the common and most fruitful topics of natural religion, and are good and useful in their place, but still the preference must always be given to gospel-motives and arguments. And this we find to be the current language of the bible, and especially of the New Testament. Something of this has been seen already, and many scripture proofs produced under the last head, so that I may here conveniently spare many particular quotations. I will therefore only mention one, and then proceed to offer some reasons in preference of gospel-motives, above and beyond all other.

ACCORDING as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us unto glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust^a.

WERE I asked my sentiments, what the gospel is? I could not, in few words, express my idea of it better than in this, "That it is a revelation of pure and unmixed grace, both in all it reveals, and in all it conveys."

THESE sentiments seem to be countenanced by St. Peter, through the whole of these two epistles. *Elect according to the fore-knowledge of*

^a 2 Pet. i. 3, 4.

of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, &c.^a

As to its original, it is a gospel sent down from heaven with the Holy Ghost; as to its sublime mysteries, they are such as the angels desire to look into; as to its energy and power, men were by it begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: As to its effects they are durable and permanent; these souls begotten again to a lively hope, are kept by the power of God, through faith, till they come to the full possession of an incorruptible inheritance in heaven*.

As these same persons, by the same divine grace, are called, as to an heavenly inheritance in the end of their mortal race, so to glory and virtue in the way; and that their souls may be strongly animated, and supported in the mean time, there are given unto them exceeding great and precious promises, to the end that by means of them, they may by growing grace and experience of the good-

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ness

^a 1 Pet. i. 1—12.

* In this light every institution has its foundation laid in grace, is supported by grace, and ends in grace.

ness of God be made more and more *partakers of his holiness*^a, called here *the divine nature*.

Now a life of holiness, built upon these *exceeding great and precious* promises, must needs have its motives most powerful and inducing.

1st. THOSE who are saved by grace from eternal ruin, and in prospect (by faith) of heavenly glory, these are, of all creatures living, under the highest obligations to dutiful behaviour and obedience.

OUR Saviour speaking, of him who should betray him, saith, *it had been good for that man if he had never been born*^b: to have a rational and immortal soul, and to fall a victim, a sacrifice to the vengeance of God, is infinitely worse than to have no being: hence is it said of these unhappy creatures, *that they shall seek for death, and it shall flee from them*^c, *and to call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb*^d.

ON the contrary, then, that must be the greatest favour which a reasonable mind can conceive, which not only preserves one from the most dreadful impending danger, but raiseth him to the highest happiness.

WHEN we speak of redemption, here considered under the notion of a motive, or incitement, it is withal supposed, that the professing christian not only rationally believes his

^a Heb. xii. 10.

^b Matt. xxvi. 29.

^c Rev. ix. 6.

Chap. vi. 16, 17.

his redemption, but feels the power of his obligations warming his heart, and glowing in his bosom; thus it will be with him, however it may be with others.

WHAT man living, one would think, redeemed from the gallies, from the chain and the oar, but must love his ransomer; and would be willing to spend the remainder of his life and strength in his service? What traitor set at liberty by a free pardon, from the horrors attending a bloody death, and a shameful execution, but would joyfully spend his life in the service of his king and country?

WOULD any object here, if these reasonings are so just and so forcible, why are the lively effects so seldom seen, and with so few who are called christians? I answer as before, because so few comparatively feel the constraining power of redeeming love. St. Paul, and the primitive believers, found it with them much otherwise. *The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge (we thus argue, or we reason thus) if one died for all, then were all dead.* Dead in trespasses and sins^a, and by guilt under a sentence of condemnation by the law of God. But now, as if St. Paul had said, by our free redemption, things are happily altered with us, we cannot but conclude, that those ransomed by the death of Christ, *should no more live unto themselves, or at their own will and pleasure, but unto the service of him who died for them and*

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rose

^a 2 Cor. v. 14—17.

rose again. *Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.* The like effect the gospel had upon the believing Thessalonians, when it came upon them with power, carrying them through trials and sufferings for the gospel's sake, in faith and patience *to wait for the Son of God from heaven, even Jesus whom he raised from the dead, who had delivered them from the wrath to come*^a.

2dly. AGAIN, it gives great weight and power in the way of argument, that since the children of God are in a spiritual warfare with sin, satan, and the world, they fight under the standard of Christ, *as the captain of their salvation*^b; who, himself being made perfect through sufferings, is become the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him^c. The believing Hebrews, like a regiment lately raised, and not yet thoroughly seasoned to all the hardships of war; these he exhorts, that *laying aside every weight* (every unnecessary incumbrance) *and every easily besetting sin, they should look unto Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith* (who had the whole direction, defence, and protection of it under his care, and (as their example) *for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and, as their leader, is now set down at the right-hand of the throne of God*^d.

3dly.

^a 1 Thess. i. throughout.

^b Heb. ii. 10.

^c Chap. v. 9.

^d Chap. xii. 1—13.

3dly. HEAVEN is set before the saints, as a prize at the end of a race^a, and as a triumph at the end of a warfare^b. In like manner, Paul writes to the Corinthians. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down^{*}, but not destroyed.

AND so far were they from being overborne with the heavy pressure they met with, that they saw abundant reason for the contrary: we faint not; for though our outward man perish (be in perishing circumstances) or liable to perish; yet every day our inward man is renewed, and these renewings of spiritual life, joy, and comfort, were from a double cause; all things are for your sakes and for your edification, that the thanksgiving of many may redound to the glory of God: the other arose from a future prospect, our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal^c.

THE frequent meditations of the glory of heaven should constantly be mixed with faith, hope,

^a 1 Cor. ix. 24—27.
Rom. viii. 36—39.

^b 1 Cor. xv. 57, 58.

^{*} That is, sunk into very great outward distress; and at the same time, being under no prevailing dejection of mind.

^c 2 Cor. iv. 8—18.

hope, and love: these will animate the very inmost powers of the human soul, and engage them in the diligent, constant, and delightful practice of every christian duty; and no difficulty, no obstruction, no opposition, will be unsurmountable to him, whose heart is full of the hope of being for ever with Christ in heaven^a.

2dly. The gospel not only uses the strongest motives and arguments, in order to promote a conversation, as becometh the gospel of Christ; but promises, and actually conveys strength in order thereunto.

Now where all needful grace is abundantly promised, and where this grace is actually bestowed in the way of constant attendance upon God (*they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength^b*) The Lord God is both a Sun and shield: he giveth both grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. When Abram was called to leave the idolatrous Chaldeans, to sojourn among pagans, by nature, and by religion, God bestowed upon him his royal protection. *Abram fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward^c*. Thus commissioned, thus surrounded, thus protected, what had Abram to fear; especially as to his soul, his better part, his immortal interest? and when far advanced in life, he meets again with a strong reinforcement

^a 1 Thess. iv. 14—17
^c Gen. xv. 1.

^b Isa. xl. 27—31.

ment of promises and assurances from a God keeping covenant, and mercy for ever. *Abram! I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect^a.*

WHERE all manner of needful supplies are abundantly promised, where they are actually, seasonably, suitably, and sufficiently given; as the people of God find by constant experience, in patiently waiting for him, in the way of duty; these considerations must produce motives inexpressibly powerful, and inducing, to every sincerely pious mind; into such a one the thought, even a distant, a remote thought of dishonouring God by a loose and negligent conversation; it enters deeply like a soldier of a true spirit, he had much rather die sword in hand, than be carried away into a shameful captivity: what would such a christian not do, what would he not suffer, what would he not be rather than be *carried a willing captive by satan at his will^b?*

WHAT soldier would not fight to the last extremity, were he assured of constant aid, and in the end of a compleat victory? *I can* (saith Paul) *do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me^c; and what christian but can do the same, upon the assurance that as his day is, so shall his strength be^d?*

MANY a soldier gains the victory, and kills his antagonist; and after all, and at most, he saves but a mortal dying life, or gains a temporary

^a Gen. xvii. 1. ^b 2 Tim. ii. 26 ^c Phil. iv. 13.
^d Deut. xxxiii, 25.

porary glory; but the christian an incorruptible crown, one that fadeth not away. In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us ^a.

3dly. THOSE who truly serve God, and depend upon his assistance, still find these gospel-motives attended with an enlivening energy, suitable to their situation, and their circumstances, (so says David) *I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me* ^b. *Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction* ^c. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living* ^d. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and didst strengthen me with strength in my soul* ^e. Jeremiah found the same. *I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice, hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee, thou saidst fear not* ^f.

AND ever since miracles and inspirations have ceased, the worshippers of God in spirit and in truth, have still ever found him a God bearing prayer, a very present help in troubles; a God fulfilling his promises, saying, *I will never leave you nor forsake you. So that they may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me* ^g.

ST.

^a Rom. viii. 37. ^b Psal. cxix. 93. ^c Psal. cxix. 92.
^d Psal. xxvii. 13. ^e Psal. cxxxviii. 3. ^f Lam. iii. 55,
 56, 57. ^g Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

ST. Peter's interrogation will serve to conclude this section. *Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good^a? And what the apostle means by being unhurt, or not harmed, our Lord's own words to his disciples will fully explain. I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him^b.*

REFLECTION I.

THIS exhortation in the text, furnishes a good defence for vital christianity.

ST. Paul complains of some in his time, who had a form of godliness without the power. The name without the thing, the shadow without the substance, the body without the soul. And our author, from whose writings we have taken our theme, every where sets such a religion at nothing: if I give my body to be burned, and my goods to feed the poor, *if I have not charity, i. e. love,* it profiteth me nothing; and our Lord says the same, ye worship ye know not what. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, the Father seeketh such to worship him. Without faith it is impossible to please him, and what spirits, and what consciences they must have, who can ever warmly defend the sufficiency of a dead

^a 1 Pet. iii. 13.

^b Luke xii. 4, 5.

dead religion, to promote the true interest of mankind and of the world, I know not.

BUT leaving these, what greater proof could be given of the man's sincere esteem, who when he had found one pearl of great price, sold all and bought it, or neglected all in comparison of it.

THIS same prize Paul himself found, and for it suffered the loss of all things, and to the end of life persisted invariably of the same mind: to these may be added, the long cloud of witnesses, who finished their course long before the commencement of the New Testament, as may be seen Heb. xi. and xii.

1st. Multitudes of new proofs have been since seen in the christian martyrology; and, doubtless, many more may be yet behind before the end of time; but greater instances of the power of christianity, as carrying all before it; greater instances of love to God, and Christ, and a disinterested, calm, determinate resolution to abide by the same cause, to the last extremity, are not to be expected among mortals.

WHEN our Lord was upon earth, and did almost innumerable miracles, such as never man did; yet; after all the challenge is renewed again and again, what sign shewest thou that we may believe? so these, the modern enemies of Christianity, after all the instances in the Bible, and the whole catalogue of the martyrs, these remain still in as much doubt as ever, of the truth of supernatural religion,
called

called by our Lord a being born again; and by St. Paul, a new creature.

IN other cases, a few instances of facts, well attested, will satisfy most men enquiring after truth; but here nothing seems to do.

BUT then it ought to be remembered that demonstrations of truth are expected to obtain credit, not only according to the reality of the things themselves, but also according to their nature, and also according to the capacity, and the inward disposition of the persons to whom the truth is proposed. No need of any more than one sun to prove it is day at noon; but then it must also be allowed that the person must have sight, otherwise, let the sun shine in its fullest strength, he cannot see it: for though the sun has a power of giving light, it has no power of conveying sight to the blind, nor have the blind any faculty whereby to receive it.

As to mental truth, operations in arithmetic, or problems in geometry, or the like, these have truth in them fully demonstrable to men of full age, and who have had their minds exercised in those studies; but they appear no truths to children of a few years old; or to idiots void of reason, through their utter incapacity.

AGAIN, as the human sight may labour under strong obstructions through films, or through diseases incident to the eyes may fail totally, so it may be with the understanding, the mental eye of the soul. Now if it be considered

considered what these truths are on the one hand, which the gospel reveals, and what the human mind is through depravity of nature on the other, it may in some sort be seen, why those very things, which are so very amiable and attracting to some, look insipid, and despicable to others, even to detestation and aversion.

THE word of God, in the Old Testament and New, is full of such expressions of the depravity of mankind; as blindness, darkness, enmity and death, all teaching how both incapable and averse the unregenerate mind is to the receiving and approving of the gospel in its purity and spirituality.

ST. Paul seems to have comprised the sum of this argument now in hand, 1 Cor. ii. throughout, and in a particular manner, ver. 14 and 15, resolving both the incapacity and dislike on the one hand, and the choice and approbation on the other, into their true original causes the total original defection on the one side, and the over-powering operation of the Holy Spirit on the other.

THE natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*

To

* q. d. The regenerate, the gracious man, one who has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, as a sanctifying spirit,

To conclude this argument, if this subject be followed by a scripture light (for in the present case we have no other that can be depended upon) thus stands the Antithesis.

—*DEAD* in trespasses and sins^a; but God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins hath he quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)^b.

YE were sometimes darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord.—I will bring the blind by a way they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known, I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight^c.

THE carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be^d. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power^e.—Ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered you^f.—

Now being made free from sin, and become servants unto God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the

I wages

spirit, he only is a competent judge of those things that are peculiar to a man endowed with graces, while he that is destitute of this grace can be no proper judge at all, any farther than of his outward life and conversation. 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.—We have the mind of Christ, ver. 16.

^a Ephes. ii. 1.

^b Ver. 4, 5.

^c Isa. xlii. 16.

^d Rom. viii. 7.

^e Psal. cx. 3.

^f Greek. Whereto ye were delivered. Margin—

In quam estis traditi. Beza. q. d. melted down and poured into the mould of the gospel.

wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

FINALLY, it is supposed that these are spiritually risen with Christ, by faith of the operation of God; and therefore are expected to set their affections on things above, and to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God; he is their life, and their life is hid with him*.

SAVING grace, where it enters, effects an entire revolution, *old things passed away. It is a new creation, all things become new**: Notwithstanding the believer is not exempted for the present from the weakness, and infirmities that are common to human life.

ON such principles as these, is established a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ, and such who have thus received Christ, ought therefore to walk as Christ also walked*: who hath left them an example that they should follow his steps*; and such a conversation will exceed a life of dead morality, as much as sterling gold excels tinsel*.

REFLECTION II.

How happy are they whose christian-conversation is built upon gospel-principles, is animated by gospel-motives, and is directed by a gospel-rule!

WOULD

* Rom. vi. 17, 22, 23. Col. iii. 1, 2, 3.
2 Cor. v. 17. John ii. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22.

* This section may be considered as a supplement to the heads foregoing.

Would you be excited, my friends, and inspired with a discreet, and humble zeal for the honour and credit of your christian profession, study more and more to know, and prize your privileges. You are called to virtue, but it is such a virtue, that can neither disgrace nor enslave you. It is such a virtue that is your glory. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, (saith David) they will be still praising thee.* They have abundant reason for it: *His mercies are new every morning, great is his faithfulness.*

In whatever light these things are considered, (provided it be a just one) they are still amiable and delightful; not cloying and nauseating, like the pleasures of sense: by the constitution of divine wisdom and grace, the pure waters of the river of life, clear as crystal^a; are by the hand of the Holy Spirit, as the sanctifier and comforter of the saints, conveyed through the channels of gospel-ordinances, and gospel-institutions, so that in all the appointments of the gospel, the people of God are directed to believe and expect supplies of divine grace accordingly, to assist, to strengthen, to sanctify, and comfort their souls. In prayer, *We have a great high-priest, passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, — Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

I 2

IN

^a 2 Pet. i. 3.^b Psal. lxxxiv. 4.^c Lam. iii. 23.^d Rev. xxii. 1.^e Heb. iv. 14, 16.

IN the Lord's supper, *Do this in remembrance of me^a. Greater love than this hath no man, than that he lay down his life for his friends^b; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us^c; when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly^d. In attendance on public worship. Blessed are they that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance^e. I will bear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace to his people, and to his saints, &c.^f*

So that there is no one duty commanded, in the gospel-dispensation, but is supported by gospel-promises; promises to assist in prayer^g, promises in public worship^h, in meditation, &c.ⁱ. To believers, every injunction throughout the whole system of religion, even the hardest, the most mortifying, the most disagreeable to nature, flesh, and sense, is, eventually; and in the conclusion, as much their privilege, as much their advantage, as it can be their duty^k. *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you,*

^a 1 Cor. ii. 24. ^b John xv. 13. ^c Rom. v. 8.
^d Rom. v. 6. ^e Psal. lxxxix. 15. ^f Psal. lxxxv. 8.

^g Then, Peter said, behold we have forsaken all and have followed thee; what shall we have therefore? To which our Lord replies immediately, fully, and emphatically, Verily,—an hundred fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting, Matt. xix. 27—29. Luke xviii. 28—30.

you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light^a.

R E F L E C T I O N III.

If gospel-motives are so efficacious and powerful, then let those who are sunk into an habitual decay, timely look to themselves, and admit of the scripture's solemn warning.

DECAYED professors, for a long time together, impose upon their fellow-christians by a fair carriage, and by agreeable conversation, when, God knows, they are cold and dead at heart^b; their duties are dead and sluggish, the word and ordinances but indifferently attended, and the more private meetings and assemblies of the people of God least of all^c: yet things go on for a season, though not without suspicion; yet without severe censure, till at length some bold temptation surprizes them in some unhappy, unguarded hour, and casts them down, as in an instant, from the top-pinnacle of that confidence, into darkness, distress, and trouble^d. *What* (saith our Lord to his drowzy disciples) *could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation^e.*

BUT these whom I now more directly warn, are not supposed to be warm, zealous, unguarded, christians, such as Peter before his fall;

I 3

but

^a Matt. xi. 28—30.
x. 25.

^b Rev. iii. 1, 2.

^c Heb.

^d See both David's and Peter's case.

^e Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.

but such who are more like Solomon's sluggard, a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep^a: so far gone as commonly to be like persons more than half asleep, fretful, and peevish with those who would endeavour to awake them; and who seldom think themselves so far gone as they are, when indeed this very temper of being unwilling to be admonished, in a sort proves the very thing. All stand in need of warning (so saith the author of the epistle to the Hebrews) *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin^b.* And if all stand in need of warning, none more so than those who see the least need of it, and are the most reluctant to it.

BUT with whom am I reasoning the case here, with such who never had the grace of God in truth; who never pretended to any more than a mere moral conversation; and never pretended to believe any more to be needful, in order to obtain the favour of God, and the hope of eternal life? No, my concern lies with such who have made an open profession of their faith in Christ, of their being planted with Christ in likeness to him, both in his death, burial, and resurrection;

to

^a Prov. vi. 9, 10, 11, and Chap. xxiv. 30—34.

^b Heb. iii. 12, 13.

to be born again, to be risen with Christ by faith of the operation of God: I am now treating with such who would take it exceeding hard, to be thought they were not very good christians; and why so, but because no one can say they are bad, or that they have no grace at all? Will you then (such will be ready to say) judge mens hearts? No; but if I do not, there is one above that will: and, to justify this freedom, read the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. ii. and iii. as they are directed to the seven angels (messengers, or ministers) of those seven churches: let their several contents stand as precedents for the ministers of the gospel to be guided by, even to the world's end; and, in particular, let it be judged by our Lord's remonstrance to the church of Sardis, Chap. ii. 1, 2, 3. whether the lord and governor of the gospel-church, will be put off with a dead form of religion. *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, which are ready to die; for, I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

It is for thee, O professing christian! who hast, at thy baptism, and on thy entrance into church-communion, made a declaration

of having tasted that the Lord is gracious, and to whom thou art come by faith as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; and therefore to thee Christ is precious (as under the profession that thou art a true believer in him). Is it for thee after all this to lie fast asleep in a dead round of religious duties? such as bring neither glory to God, or any benefit to thy own soul? is it a thing indifferent to thee to have so many duties, specious in show, to be set at nothing? is it, to thee, of no concern, to slight, quench, or grieve the Holy Spirit by thy negligence, by whose grace alone thou canst be sealed to the day of redemption? Is not this making woful work for a death-bed, by stuffing thorns into thy dying pillow. O might these hints have a happy and kindly effect on some, to awaken them to a seasonable repentance and reformation! But O how happy were it to have the conclusion of this epistle, to the church at Sardis, to be their just character, from the mouth of Christ, *the faithful and true witness* *; and to have the promise annexed to it: *Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me*

* Were I in need (said one) of testimonials, I could obtain many of them from my fellow-ministers, and fellow-christians; if Christ will not give me a character, what will become of me?

* Rev. iii. 14.

me in white, for they are worthy! He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment^a, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; but I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels!

^a Rev. iii. 4, 5. An ancient allusion to such who standing for a public place wore white garments, and were thence called candidates.



S E R-

S E R M O N IV.

On the same SUBJECT.

P H I L. i. 27.

*Only let your conversation be as becometh
the gospel of Christ——*

*Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained,
let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the
same thing, Chap. iii. 16. **

WERE any one to ask, since sal-
vation is all of grace, to what
end serve good works? and why
so many of them? and so much
urged, and insisted on? one
would think it might be an answer sufficient
for any reasonable being. Because God has
commanded them, and the whole Bible, Old
Testament and New, is full of rules, direc-
tions, and injunctions accordingly; not to
deserve or to merit salvation, but out of true
gratitude and love to God, for the gift of
Christ

* This I add by way of motto, or by way of tran-
sition.

Christ his Son, and for grace here, and glory hereafter, in him, and by him.

METHINKS the divine being seems to bespeak his children, adopted by grace into his family, as one of great riches, and opulence might to his. "I have provided plentifully
" for you in future life, to which you never
" contributed any thing, nor do I expect you
" so much as to earn your own maintenance;
" but this I will have my family know, that
" I will have none that belongs to my house
" maintained in idleness."

It remains according to the former proposed method.

3dly. To point out some of those more particular, and immediate duties towards God, ourselves, the church of God, and the world, which pertain to a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ; and may serve to shew, that it is not only an honest, just, and sincere conversation, but an honourable and amiable one; and then enforce the whole argument from the consideration of the emphasis of the word only: "Only let your conversation be as
" becometh the gospel of Christ."

FIRST we have some things to consider, which have a particular respect to God, which things serve much to promote a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ.

1st. To have an abiding, awful, impressed sense of the divine presence.

2dly. To be, in some sort, habitually heavenly-minded.

3dly.

3dly, To be addicted or habituated to prayer, so far as to give all to God's care and direction, and to be willing to leave all with him.

THESE I shall speak to here, more especially, as having a happy influence on the life, and on the outward conversation of professing christians.

FIRST an abiding awful impression of the divine presence.

THIS may well be thought one of the peculiarities of the true and sincere children of God: or, as we may so say, a new covenant blessing. *I will be their God, and they shall be my people, I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them^a.*

This inwrought impression, both from its reaching to the inmost recesses of the human soul, and for its permanency, and duration, is called, *a putting the laws of God into their hearts, and writing them in their minds^b.* On the reverse, it is set down as the sum total of human apostacy, *There is no fear of God before their eyes^c.*

THIS exquisite sensibility of mind is elsewhere (to shew how directly contrary it is to that principle which governs carnal nature) called, *a taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh^d.*

WHEN

^a Jer. xxxii. 38, 39. ^b Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. x. 16.

^c Rom. iii. 18. Psal. xxxvi. 1, 2, 3. ^d Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27.

WHEN therefore the holy scriptures would comprize much in a little; or, all in one word, we find things thus expressed, *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole Duty of man.* Other men find their spirits awed only with the fear of the censures of men; while few, if any, close serious thoughts are spent upon this, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* And if they seem awed with the thought of a scandalous crime, yet where advantages may be taken, under a colourable pretext, their consciences sleep in quiet.

THE spirit and temper of the good governor of Judea, and his conduct in his arduous, and dangerous, though highly necessary and important office, are worthy of our present notice; and a shining precedent to all posterity, of a truly generous, benevolent, and pious spirit.

NEHEMIAH had found that former governors, before his coming into office, had been rigorous, and expensive to the people; and that even their servants, under their countenance, were tyrannical and imposing; whereas he in a great measure bore his own expences, to ease a poor and impoverished people.

AND what was his inducement, was it to avoid a popular odium? or to gain the applause of men? No, this I did; and this and that did not I, because of the fear of God; and then
humbly

humbly closes all with the pious ejaculation, *Think upon me my God for good*; referring all his cause to his God, and leaving the decision to him. O how happy were it for christian churches, for societies, for families, for the world, if these were more generally the governing principles of men!

THAT conversation which is as becomes the gospel, in other respects, ought also to be deeply seasoned with an awful sense of the divine presence; and that the eye of God is in a peculiar manner upon his own people, so as to inspect and censure all their actions. *I know thy works*, is still the preface to every church in Asia, Rev. ii. iii. *Let my heart* (saith David) *be sound in thy statutes that I be not ashamed. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments*.

THE people of God are, according to their character, and way of worship, his professed children; and as wise and prudent parents are usually, by far, more strict upon the carriage and behaviour of their own children, than on that of their common servants, so the minds of children, especially those of a more affluent condition in life, are supposed to have a breeding and an education accordingly; these used to have their minds considerably wrought upon, even in early life, to a degree of ambition, and elevation above low and sordid actions, as being constantly taught that indecencies, and indecorums in them, more than in low life,

• Nehem. v. 14—19.

• Psal. cxix. 80, &c.

life, reflect dishonour on their parents; and are like to be resented accordingly.

Be this then frequently called to mind, that as without some degree of this inwrought fear, the devotion of the soul to God will never be firm and steady; so the duties towards men, as men, and towards christians, as christians, will never be thoroughly sound, however plausible they may show at a distance.

THE honour of God is dearer to a sincere soul than even life itself, with all its enjoyments; and it gives the tender heart a real pain if it does but imagine that dishonour is like to come to the cause of Christ, by any light and trifling behaviour.

2dly. It contributes to a conversation becoming the gospel, to be, in some sort, habitually heavenly-minded.

SINCERE and unaffected heavenly-mindedness recommends the ways of christianity vastly more, than all the finest orations and encomiums in the world: for let a man's discourse be ever so artful and ingenious, if still his temper be churlish and uncivil, sordid, peevish, proud, and covetous, it will only tend to make men, who have no grace, the more to nauseate the profession of religion, and still to fly farther off from it.

THERE is in a truly heavenly temper something so inexpressibly amiable and inviting; there is such an aptitude in it to invite souls to God, to Christ, to religion; that although the most pious person in the world cannot

communicate grace to another, yet has it been often blest to the drawing of thoughtless, giddy sinners, into a close and serious consideration of christianity. *Beholding their pious conversation in conjunction with religious fear.*

It is owned, that all who are sincerely gracious, are not so happy in their tempers, or in the command of their passions, or so ornamental in their outward profession as could be wished, in respect to heavenly-mindedness; yet certainly, such a frame of mind, such a habitude of soul, cannot but be exceedingly desirable, for the inexpressible calmness, tranquillity, and rest, it brings into the christian's bosom, *even that peace of God which passeth all understanding*^b. This is above all things to be desired, upon the account of its charming, sweet, diffusive influence towards others. Where this peace of God rules in the heart, it makes the christian both thankful^c, and fruitful; it produces a true moderation of desire after worldly riches, worldly pleasures, worldly gratifications of all kinds.

AND, on the other hand, as this happiness of mind and conduct, is not found equally in all that are good; and though heartily to be wished for, yet is hardly to be expected in all; so also we ought not to flatter ourselves, that, be this grace ever so lovely, that all mankind will be struck with the beauty of it, far from it. Sinners love their sins too well to leave them upon that account. And

many

^a 1 Pet. iii. 2. ^b Phil. iv. 4—7. ^c Col. iii. 14, 15.

many are of such a churlish, swinish temper, that if you lay pearls before them, they are excessively in love with their own humour; all the return that might be expected, would only be to turn again and rend their officious benefactor: should any therefore think the lower, or the meaner of this heavenly disposition of mind? by no means certainly; if the eyes of bats and owls abhor the sunshine, do reasonable beings esteem the light of the day ever the less to be a blessing on that account?

3dly. A CONVERSATION as becometh the gospel, in respect to God, is attended with constancy in prayer. *Not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, continuing instant in prayer*^a. (Saith David) *I give myself unto prayer*^b.

It is thought of but by very few, and can be fully described by none, the universal influence that devout, constant, fervent prayer, has through the whole of the christian life. *The effectual fervent prayer*^{*}, *of a righteous man, availeth much*. It availeth much not only in obtaining particular blessings for themselves or others, as the apostle instanceth in the case of Elias, &c; but also it must needs be of most general and universal use in life; since this way God bestoweth all the blessings of communicative grace, which influence, ani-

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^a Rom. xii. 11, 12.

^b Psal. cix. 4.

^{*} Or *in-wrought prayer*. See Pool's Annotations on James v. 16.

mate, and inspire the soul of the true christian; and it sheds its benign influences through every part of his conduct and conversation.

ONE thing well done is twice done, is a common saying; never more true than here: the man whose soul is deeply engaged, and as it were, steeped in prayer, will perform the various good offices belonging to the christian character in a very different manner, and spirit than what others commonly do: what zeal for the honour of God? what sincere, tender, affectionate regard for the souls, the bodies, the lives, the true interest of mankind, will he discover, beyond the cold, stiff, and formal pretensions of others, whose highest ambition is no more than to gain, and secure an empty name? and those whose minds are any thing under the impressions of vital religion, will discover a real difference in the manner of doing the very same thing.

As I propose to direct these duties, I have under consideration, to the point of general usefulness, and as they are promotive of a spirit inclined to public good; I might abundantly shew how this spirit of prayer discovered itself, in the servants of God, both under the Old and New Testament; and how surprisingly they were animated by it, to serve the church of God, and to do good to their fellow-creatures.

TIME would fail me to relate and display, the many instances of this kind on divine record: What a wonderful spirit of generous disinterested

disinterested public zeal appeared in Moses, when he, as a mediator, threw himself in between an incensed deity, and a guilty, God-provoking people! who but Moses durst have ventured to interpose, when God had said, let me alone that I may consume them? Who would not have found his resolution shaken, to intercede for such an ungrateful, unthankful people, as they were, who while the whole weight and care of conducting them through the wilderness lay upon him, yet could still use him in so base a manner? who, I say, but one under such extraordinary influences of a heavenly temper would have laid hold on, such a seemingly fair opportunity to raise his own glory on their ruin, when the overture was made? *let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation, greater and mightier than they*; but what was the enlargement of his family, the aggrandizing of his name, what his being king of a great nation, what the possession of the whole world to this, *what wilt thou do unto thy great name?* “what will the heathen say, because he could not bring them up into the land he promised them; therefore, he, their God, as a blind to cover his own impotence, hath taken occasion to differ with them, and to destroy them in the wilderness?” such was the import of his pleading with God in their

K 2

favour.

¹ Exod. xxiii. 10.
Deut. ix. 14.

Numb. xiv. throughout.

favour. So much is the soul of this inspired lawgiver devoted to the honour of his God, and so intensely set upon doing good to the church and country, to which he stood related, that it carried all before it.

In the Psalms of David, we have many examples of this kind; how does the holy Psalmist pour out, in full ardor, his whole soul to God, in behalf of the church, and most earnestly, and pathetically exhorts others to do the same? *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions sakes, I will now say peace be within thee. Because of the house of our God, I will seek thy good.* In the 137th Psalm, the zeal and spirit that breathe through the whole are wonderful, the animation of the style and language is truly divine. And the very same spirit of prayer is to be seen, in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, about the time of the Jews return from the Babylonish captivity.

From instances, like to these, may be gathered, that a truly gospel-conversation is such, when the gospel comes home to the souls of men, not in word only, but with power, and invites men to make a public profession of the name of Christ, under the sacred impetus of pure christian charity, which is the bond of perfection.

WOULD

WOULD you then, O christians! do much for God, and his cause, much for Christ and the gospel in your day and generation; live much with God, and be frequent in breathing out your desires to him for the public good.

LET it be no discouragement to thee, because thou art situated in low life, and seemest to be buried in obscurity; since thy prayers are not to *him that hath eyes of flesh, or seeth as man seeth*^a; but to that God who regardeth the prayer of the humble, who dwelleth with the lowly^b, whose eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are still open to their cry^c. If you cannot assist the church of Christ by your contribution, you may do much another way, by your prayers and supplications at a throne of grace; you may be blessed greatly for the good of many souls, through the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.

ST. Paul, having in hand, to raise a charitable contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem, who had received the first spiritual fruits of the gospel-grace; he lets the Gentile-churches, who were in better outward circumstances, *know, that they were their debtors, and finally concludes with this most pathetic request. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me;—and that my service*

which

K 3

^a Job x. 4. ^b lsa. lvii. 15. ^c Psal. xxxiv. 15.

which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints^a. Know then, that gifts and titles, estates and riches, will all fail; but charity and love, will abide for ever^b.

2dly. WE are to point out some duties which christians owe to themselves, which if attended to, may have (through the divine blessing) a happy influence upon others: those I shall mention are, moderation, self-denial, diligence, and application of mind to every necessary and important business.

1st. MODERATION in the enjoyment of lawful pleasures.

THERE are some pleasures that may not be grossly sinful in themselves, but yet may be in a sort unlawful, and hurtful as the circumstances of persons, or things may be; and there are pleasures that are both lawful and useful, and yet even these may be indulged to a sinful and unseasonable excess.

THIS is what the apostle seems to intend, Phil. iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand*. The direction is both plain and universal. Let your moderation be known *unto all men*: q. d. "Let this "gospel-virtue be conspicuous to all." To the good for their instruction; to the bad for their conviction. Moderation, in the use of all the innocent comforts of life, exceedingly recommends religion; and if this be done without singularity, or affectation, I had almost said nothing more so; since the carnal
part

^a Rom. xv. 30—31.

^b 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

part of mankind hold nothing more tenaciously than their sensual enjoyments; and, if those who make no particular pretensions to religion themselves, see others who do, as covetous or as sensual as themselves, would they imagine there was any difference? But when they see that through the power of such heavenly principles, these can calmly, rationally, and deliberately resign their pleasures for the sake of a good conscience, or can enjoy them without being enslaved by them; this makes their profession of christianity shine with a heavenly glory. It is the freedom of this resignation, that gives it both its weight in the balance of estimation, and its real dignity; for who, of consideration, regards one's parting with only that which he cannot keep any longer.

THOSE who are given up to pleasure, are said to be *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*^a, and that such are *dead while they are alive*^b. The censure, though severe and keen, is not a whit more than what is strictly just; for whatever a man holds as fast as he possibly can, and will not part with without great remorse and reluctancy, all account he loveth most.

WHOEVER makes a public profession of being a servant and disciple of Christ, at the same time says, in effect, I leave all to follow him; if after all this, they will quit the service of God, and the cause of Christ, or

K 4

thrust

^a 2 Tim. iii. 4.

^b 1 Tim. v. 6.

thrust the duties of christianity into any narrow corner of their time, or shuffle them over any how, that they may give room for their worldly pleasures, what man living can believe them?

BUT the truly godly have very good reasons for their conduct; the one is they have pleasures, much purer and much higher than all the delights of sense, even in their greatest plenitude, and in their highest elevation. *One day in thy courts (saith David) is better than a thousand elsewhere^a; thy loving kindness is better than life^b; whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee^c.* These, like their blessed Saviour, have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of; It is their meat and drink to do the will of their heavenly Father, and to finish his work^d.

ANOTHER reason he hath for this moderation is, *The Lord is at hand.* Christ is soon coming to the last and final judgment, and will soon put an end to all the pleasures of time and sense, to all the gay, empty, amusement of the present world: when the heavens and earth shall pass away and be no more, as to their present form, situation, and use; then will the blessed redeemer come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. Then will he bring them into the immediate presence of God their heaven.

^a Psal. lxxxiv. 10. ^b Psal. lxxiii. 3. ^c Psal. lxxiii. 25, ^d John iv. 32, 34.

ly Father, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right-hand are pleasures for evermore. The belief of the certainty, the reality, the fulness, the eternity of these pleasures, what room, what necessity, what inclination will such have, to have their time devoured, and their minds stuffed with carnal pleasures? Such souls have their affections pre-engaged to more noble objects.

CARNAL pleasures are very far from being real friends to vital religion; and though some can find a way to make these consist with some degree of their outward profession of religion; but, while they have so done, they have never found their graces flourish.

2dly. In order to a conversation, as becometh the gospel of Christ, there will need some considerable degree of self-denial.

SOMETHING of this kind may be included under the former head, in the temperate, and moderate enjoyment of the innocent pleasures of life; but this is not what I here intend by the word self-denial, nor do persons, more commonly, understand it so.

It were easy to prove that self-denial, is an absolutely necessary duty of natural as well as of revealed religion; so that no man can serve either God, or man, the church of Christ, or the world, or even himself, to any good and profitable purpose without it: a king, or any superior magistrate, if he does not in some things put on self-denial, for the good of those

those over whom he rules, or for whose service he is promoted, his government degenerates into tyranny, by making his own will his law, and the chief rule of his government.

If it be so, that no man can acquit himself any thing tolerably in social life; so far from it, that without some good degree of self-denial, he even unmans himself, and destroys his usefulness to others; how is it to be thought, that, without it, any man can be a good christian?

BUT this doctrine of self-denial, is more emphatically and abundantly commanded, enforced, recommended, and exemplified in the New Testament by Christ, and his apostles; and our Saviour declares in so many full and express words, that if any man does not deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow him, he cannot be his disciple.

AMONG the many branches of self-denial, so often treated of, and diversified amongst practical divines, these three are generally laid down, as containing the grand division, sinful-self, righteous-self, and worldly-self.

As to sinful-self, the necessity of self-denial, appears from the whole doctrine of the depravity of human nature; and evil, vitiated inclinations, they are so cast and mingled with our very frame and constitution, that they seem to be, as it were, parts of ourselves; from whence christians are called upon to *mortify their members that are upon the earth,*

covet-

covetousness, evil concupiscence, &c. To cut off a right-hand and pluck out a right-eye; operations never done, or thought of being done, by any one's consent, but in cases of the very last extremity, and when life is in the utmost danger; but as in some cases of necessity, the operation is unavoidable, and life is preferable to the loss of a limb, so saith our blessed Lord, it is better to enter into life, having but one eye, or but one hand, than having both to be cast into hell.

Now the main difficulty lies in christian's repressing and restraining these sensual and inordinate desires of the human mind. These are in the above cited text, called by their connection and alliance, their disposition and tendency, members that are upon the earth; because as long as men live upon the earth, they will still find an inward inclination, more or less, to some one or other of earthly things unlawfully, or inordinately; unless the soul be in a more than common way, under the influence of divine grace.

AND as this gracious disposition of mind, to oppose and mortify sin, is so definitive of the christian character, that without this principle wrought within him, he can never be a true and sincere christian; so if this principle of grace, be not, in some good degree, wrought out into act and exercise in life, the christian, in his profession, will never shine.

THERE

THERE are many persons who are naturally inclined to bad humours, to boils and breakings out, almost continually; these often fall into bad hands, persons pretending to cure them by only outward applications, never striking at the root of their disorder, which lies in their blood and juices; by which mistake, these corrupt humours retire inward, settle upon the vitals, and by that means they are still sickly and languishing, as long as ever they live.

THUS it is amongst the professors of the christian religion, there are too many whose corrupt humours, and evil dispositions are apt to break out frequently, as the incidents of life occur, and as various temptations offer, suitable to their natural inclinations, at which times of sudden temptation, they seem as weak as water, as to making resistance; though after the cause of the temptation is removed, and the order of the vicious passion has spent itself, they seem to repent sincerely of their folly, and begin to think of ways and means to avoid falling into the like sin for the future; but all is found to little purpose; the reason is, the root of sin is not mortified within, or its power subdued by the inward efficacy of divine grace; thus these vainly labour to make clean the outside of the cup and platter, while all uncleanness remains within.

THE
 Matt. xxiii. 25. Luke xi. 39.

THE old observation is a just one, that in almost all christian churches, especially if they are numerous, there are some to be found, that are hardly good enough to hold their places at the Lord's table, and yet are not so vicious in life and morals as to be cast out; the reason is, for substance, the same as I have but now given, their souls are full of corrupt, disorderly, unruly passions, unmortified, unsubdued, and their behaviour both in the church, and in the world, is unlovely and unsavoury; and especially, amongst serious and sensible christians, disagreeable and distasteful, and so they will continue, unless purified and purged by the soul-sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

FROM hence it is that our Saviour directs his disciples, *Have salt in yourselves*.*

He that would be ornamental in his life, and amiable, agreeable, and lovely in his deportment and discourse, must have his soul deeply seasoned with the salt of grace; and where this seasoning is found, there, and there only will also with it be found the gracious exercise of self-denial.

I MIGHT here instance also the need of denying righteous-self and worldly-self, and shew the absolute necessity of having the mind taken off from all mean, low, and selfish views, in all undertakings that concern the cause of God and truth, so that no worldly gain, honour, or applause, should by any means

* Mark. ix. 50.

means be the governing motive, in these respects; so no fear of temporal loss, disgrace, or persecution, should deter any one from what appears to him a plain and absolutely necessary duty.

THE most mortified, the most watchful christian, will find it hard, in matters of warm debate, to command his own temper; but, at the same time, self-humouring pride, ought to be constantly watched against, and prayed against constantly, as having a very ill effect upon one's spirit, as well as on that of others.

THE apostle Paul gives this, as a general and universal rule, to the Corinthians; *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved.*^a

AND that no one might have any room to say, this plausible carriage of his was (as we proverbially say) *but outward, and but skin deep*, he tells them, *that he kept under his body, and brought it into subjection, lest while he neglecting this, so necessary means of self-denial, should destroy, in a great measure, his own public usefulness; which he doubtless means, when he says, lest whilst I preach unto others, I myself should be a cast away*^b.

3dly. It belongs to a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ, for a christian to be active

^a 1 Cor. x. 32, 33.

^b 1 Cor ix. 27. probably alluding to the salt that hath lost its flavour, Matt. v. 13.

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active and diligent in those duties, which, as a man, and as a christian he is called to.

SLOTH and indolence, are dishonourable among all ranks and degrees of men, among none so much as among professing christians. A slothful man (says Dr. Lucas) "Is a fit companion for Moles, Bats, and Owls:" against no vice are christians more warned in the holy scriptures; nothing more hurtful, nothing more dangerous to the cause of religion in general, or to the growth of grace in every individual believer, than an habitual allowed negligence! Against this the gospel gives the best motives, the best assistance, and the best encouragements.

A PROFESSING christian has more work to do than others have; at least he has by his profession undertaken more, even double work, having taken up arms against the powers of darkness^a. Be sober (saith the apostle) be vigilant, for your adversary, the Devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour^b.

He that hath double work to do, ought to be exceedingly provident of his time; Redeem the time because the days are evil^c.

Such who live in the open neglect of God and religion, judging them by their present conduct, they seem as though they had nothing to mind but their bodies and their worldly business; as to the outside form of religion, if they keep up any, it is done at little or no expence, either of time or labour:

^a Eph. vi.

^b 1 Pet. v. 8.

^c Eph. v. 16.

hour: as to public worship on the Lord's days, it is but little to them to attend once or twice on public service, since they cannot, or dare not openly follow their worldly calling; but the christian has over and above his daily labour, his soul-concerns to mind; and if they are members of churches, they have laid themselves under obligations to watch over the souls of others, especially those of the same communion, as well as their own: such as these must at times attend upon occasional seasons of religious duties of a social nature, besides the more stated ones of more public, solemn service, which cannot be done without some expence of time, and some other occasional expences, sometimes at least; all these things put together, argue, that those members of churches who live reputably and usefully, must be industrious in their worldly calling, that so, as St. Paul saith, *the word be not blamed*:

For whatever faults others may be found guilty of, and however they may escape censure, they, who name the name of Christ, shall be sure to be reflected on. It is with the haters of serious godliness now, as it was of old, if the Israelites will go and sacrifice to their God in the wilderness, Pharaoh and his servants will immediately cry out, *Ye are idle, ye are idle*^a. Let men spend almost what time they will in will-worship, and following those who teach for doctrine the commandments

^a Exod. v. 8.

ments of men, they shall go on very quietly, and sometimes with applause, they are very good zealous people in their own way; but if persons make profession of more purity in the worship of God, then they are fanatics, sectaries, sermon-hunters, &c. when in truth, and to do christianity no more than common justice, it never sets one duty to thrust out another; but teaches christians to labour with their own hands, to eat their own bread; and he that will not work neither let him eat; and at the same time, calls for industry in a worldly calling; it inculcates to mind the one thing needful to chuse the good part, to lay up treasure in heaven, to provide bags that wax not old, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: now where both these are prudently attended to, and in their due place and order, they make religion truly amiable, and lovely; who has, or who can have so much encouragement to diligence, as he who has both the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come? Go (saith Solomon) *eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works*.*

3dly, Some things are to be considered with respect to the church of God, as necessary to a conversation, becoming the gospel of Christ, and these are, christian love, faithfulness and prudence.

L

1st.

* Eccl. ix. 7.

1st. A CONVERSATION becoming the gospel of Christ must be with christian love.

THIS then ought to be the study, and conscientious care of every serious christian, to follow St. Peter's advice, *Love like brethren^a*; and believe it, they are much mistaken, who imagine this grace will grow and thrive in the soul without cultivation.

THIS expression of the apostle, *Love like brethren*, is very significant, and is powerfully enforced, under the gospel, both by argument, precept, and example.

1st. CHRIST's laying down his life for his people, is particularly improved to this; and hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren^b.

No man, indeed, has any absolute power over his own life, to dispose of it, so as to give it away as a ransom, or in exchange for the life of another; yet in cases of extreme danger, and in the time of severe persecution, the people of God have sometimes risked their lives for the safety of their brethren in the bands of the gospel. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles^c;" and this same apostle taking his final farewell of the church at Ephesus, declares that none of the things he

^a 1 Pet. iii. 8.

^b 1 John. iii. 16.

^c Rom. xvi. 3, 4.

he suffered, or thought he might suffer at Jerusalem, moved him; neither did he count his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish the course of his ministry with joy^a; and elsewhere he gives the reason for it. *For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again^b. We which live, are always delivered to death for Jesus sake,—Death worketh in us, but life in you,—all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God^c.*

FROM such instances may be seen how both preachers and others had, at that time, their souls immoveably set upon glorifying their Saviour, and doing all possible good to immortal souls.

2dly, THESE bear the true and real image of Christ, which is of a most endearing and attracting nature to such as are under the influence of divine Grace.

THE principle of saving grace in the heart, is called, by way of eminence, the image of God, created in righteousness and true holiness^d. Christ formed within^e.—Christ in you the hope of glory.

L 2

AND

^a Acts xx. 24.^b 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.^c Chap iv. 11, 12—15.^d Eph. iv. 24.^e Gal. iv. 19. Col. i. 27.

AND inasmuch as all true believers are vitally united to Christ, by the indwelling of his spirit^a, they are said also to *be predestinated to be conformed to his image*, that it may by that means appear that *he is the first-born among many brethren*^b, i. e. all believers are elected, and fore-ordained to bear the likeness of Christ in true holiness; and that as Christ their redeemer, bears, in his human soul, the most perfect image of the holiness of God, so far as a created, finite, spirit can represent the image, or likeness of an invisible God, so they are also in their measure to be conformed to him in their temper and disposition of mind, through grace, and in its effects, in their life and behaviour.

AND, furthermore, since the most near and intimate union that subsisteth between the human soul of Christ, and the Deity, gives the holiness of the soul of Christ, the Mediator, the most inexpressible grandeur and dignity, as well as eternal duration, so the indissoluble union that subsisteth between Christ and his people, as he is God, man, and mediator, gives that image, which they bear in their souls, not only a certainty of continuance, so that it shall not be totally effaced, but also gives a peculiar glory to it beyond all other human representations.

IN all the pretended patterns of holiness, which are professedly the productions of mere nature, in its various stages of improvement, these

^a Rom. ii. 5—29.

these may seem to have the lineaments, but have nothing of the life of the originals.

LIKE causes its like, fire kindles fire, and one flame begets another; these are common observations in the natural world; and in the rational and social world, similitude of temper, manners, study, employment produce attraction; and thus it will be with the new world of grace: and though grace in one heart cannot, originally, produce grace in another's soul; yet, through the divine blessing, it happily serves to enliven and rekindle the grace of christian love where it is already begun.

3dly. THERE is also a special relation subsisting between true christians, both as believers and church-members; as believers, *they are made to drink all into one spirit, and are made partakers of the divine nature*; and being united in church-fellowship, a foundation is laid for their gradual and continual growth in grace, and especially the grace of love. The closer the stones the firmer the building, and living coals heaped together create mutual heat; while those scattered abroad gradually abate of their ardor.

THIS peculiar love between church-members, especially those of their own communion, is apt to be censured as the effect of a party-spirit and party-zeal, and no wonder if it should be so accounted by those who are utter strangers to the life of grace; but these mis-judgments ought to pass for nothing with the truly godly; all their labour should be

promote it all within their power; it having in it a divine heavenly glory, it reflects the honour of Christ to the world; *Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another*^a; and it reflects back again the light of grace to the believer's own soul, *We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren*^b.

It gives inexpressible life and spirit to the christian's endeavours after general and more public usefulness; no service will be thought much, no hazard almost too great, of faith, and labour of love, with his power, will be thought too arduous, or too expensive to do a considerable good: frailties will be overlooked, affronts and personal injuries freely forgiven; for love, in its power, will soon make its way through every obstruction.

THAT many in religious matters are actuated from the mean and low motives of party-zeal, and a party-spirit, is too evident and too notorious to be denied; but, at the same time, a truly serious and pious mind, would be ready to enquire, by what ways and means may this amiable, this lovely grace of brotherly love be promoted and increased? In answer to this necessary enquiry, I will give a few directions, and in a few words,

1st. WOULD you grow much in the grace of brotherly love, dwell much in your meditations on the love of Christ, in dying for you.

G R E A T E R

^a John xiii. 35.

^b John iii. 14.

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GREATER love than this hath no man, than that he laid down his life for his friend^a.

THE painter who would draw his piece as near to the life as possible, must lay before him the most perfect pattern he can procure, must view and review it often, till his mind is full of it; so ought the christian, by believing meditation, dwell upon the life and death of the blessed Redeemer, till by the operation of the holy spirit, his soul is gradually transformed into the divine image. Such lively transcripts were the spirits and lives of the primitive christians. *We all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord^b.*

2dly, IN observing such whom you have formed hope of that they truly fear God, and dwell most in thought upon those things that are most likely to give some evidences of real grace.

It is a too common error, instead of endeavouring to find out the real virtues of christians, to find out their more evident faults and frailties, and to dwell upon them in thought and in conversation, even to a great excess. A temper and conduct vastly injurious to the growth of christian love; therefore endeavour to find out as much as possible, those things in their temper and behaviour, those things that seem to be the

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more

^a John xv. 13.

^b 2 Cor. iii. 18.

more genuine signs and symptoms of pure grace.

3dly. THE more to provoke to brotherly love, study and examine well your own experience, and strictly and minutely those weaknesses that you yourselves are most liable to.

BEING partial, neglectful, or superficial here, is one grand reason that so many are so harsh and so unmerciful in their censures. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear one anothers burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ^a. What is here to be understood by fulfilling the law of Christ, but this, a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another^b?*

2dly. To mutual love must be added christian faithfulness.

FIDELITY is a most essential part of social friendship, and it is no less an essential part of true christian love; where this is wanting true love can never be found: those, under the specious show of christian love neglect christian faithfulness, from fondness, from a weak effeminacy of soul; or if not from these, from a far worse and more pernicious principle.

FAITHFUL love, in the sound sincere christian, although it interests itself with all the concerns of a friend, *not looking on its own, but*

^a Gal. vi. 1, 2.

^b John xiii. 34.

but on things of others^a, yet three things are its chief object. 1st. His friend's soul-welfare. 2dly. His soul's true comfort. 3dly. His christian character.

1st. KINDLY seasonable admonition, proves the truth of sincere regard to the soul's welfare.

HE that recovers the health of his friend, though it be by giving him a bitter and distasteful potion, is as much his friend, as he that regales him at his table with the most agreeable food, or the most elegant wine, and ought to be so esteemed; and it were criminal ingratitude to think otherwise, however common it may be among mankind.

2dly. As to soul-comfort, christian faithfulness takes care that it may be upon a good and solid foundation, which the christian knows is altogether inconsistent with *suffering sin upon a brother*^b. The conscientious christian is taught by his own experience, that by giving into sin, is the surest way to destroy all sensible soul-comfort; and how can he be easy to see his brother, whom he dearly loves, take into such measures, which he himself has found, by sad experience, to be a root of bitterness, a root bearing gall and wormwood.

AND there is one circumstance, which makes the reproofing a christian brother the more uneasy and difficult, and that is the pain this operation gives one's self, at the same

^a Phil. ii. 4.

^b Lev. xix. 17.

same time one attempts to correct and amend the faults of others.

Who can open, with his lance, the wound of a dear friend without deep reluctance? or replace a dislocated bone^a, but with the utmost concern to give the patient as little pain as possible, so as to make a sound cure?

3dly. FAITHFULNESS has a regard for his christian friend's moral and religious character.

It distresses a good man beyond expression, to see one of the same community whom he dearly loves, trifle with his own christian character, neglectful of what the world thinks or says of him; and if he cannot bear without resentment to hear his private character ill-treated, how much more to hear the name of Christ reproached through his misconduct. This misconduct, of too many, wrung tears from the eyes of the great apostle of the Gentiles, that instead of their conversations being in heaven, they should by their bad attempts and lives behave as the enemies of the cross of Christ^b.

3dly, To love and faithfulness, let there be added christian prudence.

And here will lie the main difficulty, to avoid the two extremes, of being over tender, of being soft and obliging on the one hand, or harsh and censorious on the other.

1st.

^a Gal. vi. 1. So some Expositors render the word in the text. *Restore in the spirit of meekness.*

^b Phil. iii. 18, 19, 20.

1st. AND primarily, beg wisdom from God; this, as in all other cases, will be needed. *The heart of man is like deep waters, scarce fathomable, and oftener not at all.* The heart is deceitful—Who can know it? persons do not in a thousand cases know to a certainty the bottom movements and motives of their own minds and actions, and how should they know more of others to any certainty? and yet some influence must be gained upon the heart and affections, otherwise advice will be but labour thrown away. God has the hearts of all in his hands, both others and your own; therefore, by humble prayer, give both to him, begging from him both direction, light and influence.

2dly, IN all matters of the nature before-mentioned, take time enough, neither speak nor act any thing rashly; but weigh as much as possible, every circumstance of the concerns you have to debate with your friend; that so by the calmness and composure of your reasoning and conduct, he may be convinced, that the affairs in hand, have had a thorough digestion, and that you aim at his real good.

4thly. A CONVERSATION becoming the gospel of Christ, ought to be circumspect with regard to the world: so the apostle to the Ephesians, chap. i. 15. *Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise. Giving no offence, neither to Jew nor Gentile*^a. q. d. *That the most obsti-*
nate,

^a 1 Cor. x. 32.

nate, and inveterate enemies of the christian religion, may have no just occasion to blame your conduct. Behold, saith Christ, I send you forth as lambs among wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves^a. In a few words, for all: only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ, before the world, is, "Let it be grave, let it be consistent, let it be affable and courteous, and let it be sincere: nothing short of these will or can ever effectually vindicate your christian character."

^a Luke x. 3. Matt. x. 16.



S E R-

S E R M O N V.

St. Paul's Temptation; and his
Behaviour in it.

2 COR. 12, 7—10.

7. *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*
8. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*
9. *And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,*
ties,

ties, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10. *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Ver. 7, **T**H E R E was given to me a thorn
8. *in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. For this I besought the Lord thrice, &c.*

As these words afford much matter of instruction, so they are also attended with some seeming difficulty and obscurity: it will therefore be needful, first to give the various parts of the text a particular explanation, and then draw from them some useful observations; agreeable to the various contents of the verses before-mentioned.

ONE end the apostle Paul seems to have in view, in this his second epistle to the Corinthians, is to vindicate himself against the insinuations of the false apostles, who endeavoured, all within their power to lessen his apostolic character, and to raise their own reputation by undermining his; and herein they behaved very proudly and insolently, loftily and boastingly: while he, on the other hand, professeth himself to be so far from boasting, even of those things which he might justly do, and which were in themselves truly great and honourable, such as visions and revelations

velations of the Lord; but rather would he glory in necessities, that so by that means the power of Christ, from whom he had received his commission, might be the more evidently seen to rest upon him, ver. 9.

IN the former chapter, the apostle glories in his sufferings, which were not equalled, even by the true apostles themselves, much less by these new upstart false ones; and in this chapter he ascends higher, even to visions and revelations of the Lord; and having given a short account of these things, he seems to stop short, as it were, saying, but now, I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me, ver. 6.

THE relation given of his having a thorn in the flesh, is because that when he relates his revelations of the Lord to him, none who might read, or hear of them, might either mistake his design in relating them, or make a wrong use of them.

THE narrative of St. Paul's revelations we have, from the beginning of the chapter, to the end of verse the 4th; and from the beginning of verse the 7th, to the end of verse the 10th, is an account of his humiliation, and the wise and gracious end of Christ thereby, which are introduced with, *Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, &c.*

THE

THE word flesh here seems to import human-nature, with its various powers, passions, and affections, together with its various impressions, or sensations; and, by a thorn being in the flesh, may be understood some one, or more uneasy and painful sentiments that nature might feel, either in body or mind, or both; in the body by feeling, or in the mind by thinking, or reflecting upon any thing that is uneasy and painful: whether one or both these were in Paul's case, is not easy to determine.

SOME imagine it to have been some bodily extreme pain; (such as the stone or the like) but it does not seem likely to be any bodily distress, since Satan is said to be the messenger in it; (as in Job's case) for, if it had been so, doubtless the New Testament would have given us some account of it, as we have of Job's of old.

SOME have thought this thorn in the flesh, was the apostle's sufferings and persecutions, for the sake of the gospel; but that this should be so intensely painful and distressing to him, seems not at all to suit with the more general account we have both of his temper, life, and character, after his conversion; for at the first he had been told, and shewed by the Lord himself *what great things he was to suffer for his sake*^a: and he afterwards assured the elders of the church at Ephesus, *that while he was going up to Jerusalem, bound in the*

^a Acts ix. 16.

the spirit, not knowing what things were to befall him there, only in general, the spirit witnessed to him, that in every city, bonds and afflictions waited for him; but, why (says he to his mourning friends) do ye thus weep and break my heart?—none of these things move me, I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ: neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I may finish my course with joy; and the ministry which I have received to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

THEREFORE it seems far more likely to be some inward affliction of mind, which, by God's high permission, came upon him; and Satan, or his agents, also were permitted to aggravate, and increase the pain.

Now whether this inward pain and distress of mind, came more directly from Satan, or from his emissaries, the thing will come to the same end*; for whether it be Satan himself or his servants, their aim is still, to the people of God, distressing, afflicting, and evil. The wicked, who are called in scripture the seed of the serpent, act like Satan himself to the outside of their power and ability: does Satan take the advantage of their outward weaknesses, to cast them down and overthrow them? so do they. Does Satan take all advantages to aggravate their sor-

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rows?

* Acts xxi. 13. and Chap. xx. 22—24.

* Our translation reads the messenger of Satan, others read the messenger Satan.

rows? so do they. Does Satan triumph in their misery and distress? so do they.

In the words are expressed the manner how Satan, or his messengers, managed the assault, namely, by buffeting him^a. A vile and abuseful manner of treating him; to strike one over the face with the hands, shews the greatest indignity and insult: now such was Paul's affliction, and allowing the expression to be figurative, as it must be, if Satan himself was the buffeter; but however the word is well suited to represent the design of the affliction, as ordained, and over-ruled of God, for his humiliation: but if the thorn in the flesh be understood of reproaches and ill-treatment from false brethren, and false apostles, by whom he was oftentimes a great sufferer, this interpretation may suit well upon several considerations, which incline me the rather to adopt it.

1st. As St. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, the judaizing teachers among the Jews, by working upon their popular prejudices in favour of the law of Moses, and highly insisting upon the necessity of circumcision, in order to salvation, created him immense trouble^b.

2dly. WHEN he enumerates the manifold perils and hazards, he had undergone for the gospel's sake, this brings up the rear, "in perils among false brethren^c."

3dly.

^a Matt. xxvi. 67.
Phil. iii. 2, &c.

^b See Acts xv. and Chap. xxi.
^c 2 Cor. xi. 26.

3dly. SEVERAL things mentioned in several verses, both in the foregoing chapters, and in the verses following our text, favour this opinion.

LASTLY, things borne from false friends, and from false brethren, are by far more fatiguing and distressing than injuries done by an open and more professed enemy. Such injuries and unworthy treatment are fretting and galling to the human mind, like a thorn in the foot of a weary traveller*.

FURTHERMORE, in the text is to be seen the very wise and gracious end of God, in giving this grievous affliction; lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, and the messenger of Satan to buffet him.

WHILE the end of Satan and his messenger was envious and malicious; the end and purpose of God was infinitely good and gracious.

IN the apostle's case (as in Job's of old) Satan found in the sequel, that his craft was no match for infinite wisdom: a plot was laid

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to

* The Lord told the Israelites by Moses, that if they did not drive out the Canaanites, those who remained would be unto them as thorns in their sides. Num. xxxiii. 55.

On the happy side the Lord promised his church, that in the latter time there should be no more a pricking briar, nor a grieving thorn, of all them that were round about them, that despised them. Ezek. xxviii.

to ruin Paul, one way or the other ; to this eternal enemy to God and souls, nothing could seem so likely ; nothing could outwardly offer so fair an advantage for a temptation, could he, with all his policy, have made it fasten ; nothing in life could have more exactly suited his purpose, or gratified his malice, than for this extra-apostle of the Gentiles, who had his commission not from Christ's footstool, but from his throne ; for him to have been exalted above measure, and like Satan himself, to have grown vain and proud, amidst the glories of heaven, he would not have envied him that transient, visionary rapture ; but, that this might not be, there is given to him a thorn in the flesh, to keep him humble ; and never were means, by way of prevention, better provided, or made more effectual ; for hardly ever was found, a mere man, more humbled, more emptied from self-seeking, or from self-exaltation, or more careful, on all occasions, to give all the glory to God, the God of his salvation.

Lest I should be exalted above measure.

THIS reason, of the divine dispensation, is twice set down in the same verse ; the reduplication shews us how much Paul had this end in view, how much he was convinced of the necessity and usefulness of it, how much he was satisfied with it, how much he desired it, and was delighted with it. *Blessed is the man*

man whom thou chastisest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law^a.

From this part of the text are several things observable.

Obs. 1. THOUGH human nature is still embarrassed with thorny cares and vexations, yet some afflictions are in their nature, or by circumstance much more so than others are; troubles of the mind are more grievous than bodily pains and sickness. "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear^b?" Spiritual troubles are worse than temporal: "thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled^c."

THE time and place and other circumstances of things, serve very much to enhance and aggravate present afflictions. Paul's affliction had these aggravating circumstances.

To be caught up to the third heaven, and soon after to have a thorn in the flesh; to be but now admitted near the throne of God, and the palace of angels, and then to be buffeted by Satan, must, to human thought, suggest something very distressing, though we cannot possibly enter into the particulars.

To be but lately company for angels, and now the object of the devil's irony, must be a trial beyond expression.

Obs. 2. SAINTS of the most exalted grace and experience, still stand in need of some exercises of a soul-humblin'g nature.

M 3

PAUL

^a Psal. xciv. 12.

^b Prov. xviii. 14.

^c Psal. xxx. 7.

PAUL was not to be trusted to himself for the management of those divine favours so lately heaped upon him, but the great God himself engages to secure the final issue of all things: saints are still kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, while they hope for an incorruptible inheritance^a.

Obs. 3. THAT divine comforts and inward improvements in grace and experience are distinct things, as much as the means and the end are.

THE highest end and purpose of God, next to his own glory, is the perfecting the holiness of the saints, which is indeed their highest happiness, as fitting them for the everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven; this being allowed, all other changeable means and methods of the divine dispensations towards them, during the present life, inward or outward, in all their variety, are but so many means conducted by divine wisdom and love to one and the same end: the buffetings of Satan, the thorn in the flesh, on the one hand, and joys and raptures on the other; all these are but still working together for their good, in making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light^b.

Obs. 4. THE distresses of the saints, as well as their joys, come from the hand of, not only a sovereign, but a gracious God.

THERE was given to me a thorn in the flesh;
FROM whence? (by permission) from the same

^a 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

^b Col. i. 12.

same hand, that caught him up to the paradise of God; who at the same time had most graciously provided, that he should not be exalted above measure. The design discovers the divine author: an end so high, so good, so gracious, could come from none but an all-powerful, and all-gracious God; who only could direct and send such mortifying means, by so vile an instrument as Satan, to so holy and to so happy an end and issue.

THE messenger of Satan to buffet me.

THE observations are,

Obs. 1. OF all persons living, none are so much the mark of Satan's envy as believers, whom God himself signalizeth with some peculiar tokens of his grace.

SATAN has, by his fall, contracted such an implacable enmity against God, and against all that belong to him, by whom his glory is made known, that the more the glory of God shines forth in their graces and in their lives, the more intensely is his envy moved.

THAT the great creator of the world should make his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and send rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons on the thankful and the evil, the just and the unjust, strikes that proud and haughty spirit but faintly, comparatively, to the light of God's countenance, and the shines of his special favour: this, if I may so say, makes his fire burn more fierce, and his hell more intolerable.

COULD he but have had the satisfaction of having all the millions that are, were, or will be of Adam's posterity, to keep him company in his infernal cave, it had then been some gratification to his malice, though it could have been no mitigation of his torment; but how intolerable must it be to him, even beyond all conception, to have the detested objects of God's grace and love for ever in his view to torment him: and still the more to exasperate his pain, every instance of divine mercy, every beam of salvation that darts from the upper world, upon a saved soul, adds to his affliction. What could raise his envy more than to see Paul exalted to the third heaven, while he himself was chained down in utter darkness and despair?

Obs. 2. God makes Satan bring about ends quite contrary to his own intentions.

THIS revelation made to the apostle as it fixed a long and deep impression on his soul, and had so good an effect upon his mind, doubtless Satan was soon aware of it; and having always a malicious eye upon him, would leave no means untried to work it out of him, and erase it as soon, and as much as possible.

BUT why, seeing Paul was like to be exalted above measure, did not Satan take the nearest, and most direct method to his exaltation? especially, since to be buffeted, to be insulted, to be reproached, was, since his conversion, very usual, and very familiar to him,

him, and in bearing that part lay his greatest strength of grace; why then, I say, did he not assault him on that, which might seem to be his weakest side?

To this I offer,

1st. THIS vision being above seventeen years before Paul's writing this epistle, he might be, and probably was but a new convert, and therefore might not be so able to bear affliction and reproach as now he was; but in seventeen years exercise (by divine grace) he was seasoned to it.

2dly. IT is not always in Satan's power to use what means he will, even though to himself they seem most likely; for in all things Satan is under a divine controul.

3dly. SATAN is sometimes so blinded as not to foresee those things, which will certainly end in the ruin of his own kingdom.

Obs. 3. THAT Satan's messengers, act according to his influence and direction, and, so far as in them lies, will do his work effectually.

SOMETIMES he sends his messengers to spread false doctrines, called the *Doctrines of Devils*, seducing spirits, &c.

SOMETIMES he sends his messengers to spread slander and infamy; thus, through the influence of false teachers, and false apostles, Paul was, in his character, a great sufferer.

Obs. 4. THAT reproach and humiliation are the lot of the most eminent saints, oftentimes

times while they continue in this present life.

Of this we have abundant assurance in the holy scriptures, and especially in the New Testament; and that those who take upon them the profession of the name of Christ, might by no means deceive themselves with vain imaginations, there is set before them a whole cloud of witnesses^a, of such who have, through much tribulation, entered into the kingdom of heaven.

THAT the christian life is a state of exaltation, is a truth most certain; but the exaltation is altogether a spiritual one, and in that view, as wide, or as different from worldly glory, as light and darkness. "Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!—Now are we the sons of God: *and yet the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*"

In other places we have this expressed in language harsh to the ear of a carnal world; "he that will be wise let him become a fool, he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, he that will save his life shall lose it, he that is ashamed of me, of him will I be ashamed. Let us run with patience,——looking unto Jesus—who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, &c. Consider him that endured such contradiction

^a Heb. xi. and xii. chapters.

diction of sinners against himself. Jesus suffered without the gate—Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach.”

THESE things, however inconsistent they may appear to carnal ears, to worldly wisdom, to human policy, are, nevertheless, fully consistent with the highest attainments in grace, and with the greatest enjoyment of the love of God that can be in the present life.

THIS subject is most excellently argued by the apostle Peter, writing to the suffering saints who were in a state of servitude. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing had happened unto you. But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye, for the spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”

THESE sufferings, even to shame, have in them such a divine dignity^a, a spiritual wisdom that maketh a man’s face to shine, and the boldness of his countenance shall be changed, not for the worse but the better; not into a gloomy, mean dejection, but into a calm, steady

^a Acts v. 41.

steady composure, that finds no cause, no reason for repentance*.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How much are they mistaken, who expect to find either constant peace, or full perfection in the present life; since even Paul the apostle, stands in need of being buffeted by Satan, or his messengers, lest he should be exalted above measure.

2. LET this teach us where to go in time of danger. "Be thou (saith David) my strong habitation whereunto I may continually resort^b." "Trust in the Lord at all times, for in the Lord Jehovah, is everlasting strength*."

3. FROM hence may be gathered a trial of a christian's growth in grace. Whatever the most may think of it, the truest and justest proportion of grace, is not so well seen in the strong sunshine of prosperity, as in the shade of adversity. Some things in nature, do not shew their beauty near so well, nor strike the eye so sensibly in an over-strong light; Job's graces never shone more, and some not so much, as in the time of his adversity. *He knoweth the way that I take, when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold^c.* Job's graces were gold before he was committed to the furnace, but afterwards they were refined gold.

* Eccles. viii. 1.

Acts iv. 13.

Chap. vi. 15.

^b Psal. lxxi. 1-4.

^c The rock of ages. Isa. xxvi. 4. Margin.

^c Job xxiii. 10.

gold. After Abraham's temptation in offering up his son, his only son Isaac, the Lord said unto him, "now I know that thou fearest God^a." Never do the graces of the saints shine so bright on this side heaven, as when they can with deliberation of soul justify an afflicting and chastising God. *Glorify ye the Lord in the fires^b!*

—I brough the abundance of the revelations.

THIS imports either,

1. THAT this was not the only revelation which Paul had, or,

2. THAT in this, in this revelation, when he was caught up to the third heaven, there were so many glorious things displayed to his view that there were, as it were, many revelations in one, or

3. THAT the revelations Paul had, abounded with strong, rapturous pleasure.

As to the first, that Paul had more visions than one, is a thing highly probable, nay certain; though we cannot ascertain the time or place when this was.

AND that there seemed to be, as it were, many revelations in one, seems to me a thing out of question. And,

THAT this revelation, here called revelations, as one singled out of many, for instance, or as having many in one, or a whole complicated blaze of glory, was such as abounded with strong rapturous pleasure, that needed an allay, is very natural to conceive; and

^a Gen. xxii. 12.

^b Isa. xxiv. 15.

and which I chuse, as to me, most likely to be the reason of his having *the thorn in the flesh given to him.*

ANY common christian capacity may suppose that to have but a glance, a short transient view of the glory of heaven, must needs be overflowing, full of the most ravishing pleasure; every ray of the sun, is in its own nature pure light, but still the nearer to the body of the sun, the brighter, the more dazzling, the more overwhelming. If a view of the glory of heaven taken by faith, as many of the saints of a private character have experienced, has filled them with joy unspeakable and full of glory, how surprising, how astonishing must the pleasures of vision be?

New prospects, if agreeable, serve much to delight the rational mind; but *eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him, what he hath laid up for them that wait for his salvation.*

“BELOVED (saith St. John) now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” only in general, we know that *when he appeareth, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is^b*; and thus much our apostle gives as the sum total of his own estimation, *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us^c*: So that
on

^a 1 Cor. ii. 9.

^b 1 John iii. 1, 2, 3.

^c Rom. viii. 18.

on the one side or the other, either by contrast, or comparison, we can form but exceeding weak and faint notions, in this present life, what are the glories of heaven. *Here we see but through a glass darkly, then we shall see face to face; then shall we see as we ourselves are seen, and know as we ourselves are known^a.*

LEST I should be exalted above measure.

THE thing here supposed, is the possibility of his being elevated, or exalted above a due height, a due medium, or proportion to his present station, situation, or employment; and what might have been the consequence of it, which *the thorn in the flesh, and the messenger of Satan*, were given to prevent.

THAT this was possible, is, I apprehend, a natural supposition, and agreeable to the sense of scripture; and such effects visions have sometimes had on the best of men.

THE soul of man is in its own nature of a vast capacity, and apt to aspire, though, since the fall, exceedingly weakened in all its powers of operation: the soul in its present state, after regeneration, still feels itself weakened, straitened, and depressed; but were these dead weights taken off, though but for a while, it would, like the heavenly flame, expand and mount surprisingly*.

NOR

^a 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

* When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables in his hand, Exod. xxxiv. his face shone, so that the congregation, and even his brother Aaron himself

NOR if the nature of such visions be duly considered, both from whom they are sent, and to what ends, need my first supposition be thought at all unreasonable †. Namely, that a soul once having admittance so near to God, the father of spirits, should grow out of relish with the lower, and more inferior concerns of life, and still in proportion to the frequency, and the clearness of those divine discoveries made of invisible realities.

HAD

himself could not hear, and converse with him familiarly, and with composure as formerly? this put him under the present necessity of speaking to them through the intervention of a veil, as an intervening, overshadowing medium. The typical accommodation of this part of divine history, by St. Paul, 2 Cor. iii. is not within my present province, my subject here being only the sublime effect of visions properly so called.

Matt. xvii. Mark ix. Luke ix. we have the account of our Saviour's transfiguration on Mount Tabor. When his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was bright as the light; the disciples overpowered with the splendor, said, for the time they knew not what, as is evident by Pete.'s speaking of building three tabernacles, one for himself, one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Daniel, through manifold overpowering visions, was sick for some time, and his comeliness turned into corruption, Dan. vii. viii. ix. and St. John fell at Christ's feet as dead, Rev. i. 17.

† As to any pretended revelations, or any merely from an human elevated imagination, I give them in this argument no credit, nor have I here any concern with them. Truth is truth still; and heavenly effects will shew their cause still, while error and enthusiasm, like an expiring candle, vanish into smoke, and leave a stink behind them.

HAD these visions of St. Paul been very frequent, and of long continuance, and had they had no alloy, or little or no mitigation, in all human appearance, he had, in a short space of time, been quite above the concerns of this lower, inferior life, and even in a sort unfit for the service of the church militant. St. Paul's love to the poor, afflicted, persecuted saints, was, perhaps, as much as that of any man living; and he seems to have had as much compassion and sympathy, as much patience, as much forbearance with the infirmities of the weak, as any ever had; but had he been long conversant with the world of spirits, and a frequent witness of the pure worship of heaven, how disagreeable would the present ignorance, the error, the carnality, the perverseness of the saints on earth have been to him? Might he not in this sense have been exalted above measure, so as not only not to relish the low things of life, but, even to bear with patience, the sinful weaknesses of the saints: for it is still supposed that he was but a man, not more than a man, a soul, possessing flesh and blood, and therefore still susceptible of some degree of hurtful impression.

IN regard to things of an infinitely lower nature than these are, now under consideration, we see how the soul of man works: men long engaged in deep and elaborate studies, grow abstracted in their meditations; they grow above familiar commerce with mean and

low things, not so much from pride, as many imagine; but from a real coldness, indifference, and disregard to them: even the pursuit of riches and honours, which the most so much set their minds upon, nothing strikes them; the blaze that men make in high life moves them not in the least.

On the other hand such who are given up to pleasure, grow out of love with contemplation, and can hardly ever endure close thinking. Those whose imaginations have been filled with the glitter of a court, find the affairs of a country-life flat and insipid to them; and whatever may be pretended by those who affect these high things, the affairs of low life must be attended to by some persons, who are fitted for them, and willing to undertake them. If all men were to attend the court, the bar, the exchange, &c. who must plow the ground, reap the harvest, or direct manufacturies? Thus it may be seen, that great elevation of mind, may be attended with hurtful consequences, as things may be circumstanced; and certainly would, were it to become general.

AND we see something of this nature exemplified, in the case of our Lord's disciples more than once: when Peter, James, and John were with him in the Mount of Transfiguration, amidst that bright blaze of Christ's glory, they lost their present light of his humiliation, sufferings, and death. *Lord (say they) it is good for us to be here,* Matt. xvii. 4. and how often

often do their minds run upon Christ's establishing a temporal kingdom, and how much do they seem elevated with the thought of which should be the greatest in his kingdom? though these last instances indeed were not the effect of vision, but of error, and mis-apprehension; yet still that of an elevated human imagination; but to return to the subject.

As to being exalted above measure, it may be thought true of others who are the people of God, who are in a much lower place and situation than St. Paul was; were they to be often entranced in raptures, and of long continuance, they would grow quite unfit for the more common cares, businesses, and labours of human life.

WE may suppose farther, that it was not impossible but that St. Paul might be exalted above measure, as to an opinion of himself, and of his privileges and attainments in christianity.

THAT this was altogether impossible, I believe no man will chuse to affirm; since with all his gifts and attainments in christianity, he was no more than a mortal man, subject to like passions as other men are, liable to many temptations, and surrounded with many dangers; much he felt from the law in his members warring against the law of his mind, *O wretched man* (saith he) *that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? he found himself oftentimes carried captive by the*

law of sin^a, much he feared, lest, while he preached to others, he himself might be a cast-away^b, i. e. fall into temptation, and spoil his public usefulness. All this is supposed possible, as well as to David, or Peter, or to Solomon, who finned after the Lord had appeared to him twice in a vision (though not of the same kind as this) as we may note hereafter.

THIS seems to be the more commonly received opinion of the sense of the place in hand, and I have no inclination to dispute about it; though I much rather incline to that which I have given before, that the thorn was given to fit Paul for those low, yet pious, humble, charitable, condescending offices, which he had yet, for a season, to fulfill for the service of the church of Christ.

AND yet farther, to support my opinion on this head, I would here note,

1st. I do not find that those visions mentioned in scripture, which approach the nearest to this of St. Paul's, ever produced such levity of mind as this opinion supposes, or any thing like it, but just the contrary: As for instance,

WHEN Jacob, in his way to Padan-aram, had at Bethel the vision of the ladder, when he awoke out of sleep, such were his deep and solemn reflections. *How dreadful is this place, this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven; surely the*
Lord

^a Rom. vii. throughout.

^b 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Lord was in this place, and I knew it not! and that this vision, had a soul-humbling effect upon him seems still more evident, by its ending in so modest a resignation of himself to the conduct, and disposal of divine providence. He *vowed a vow, if God, says he, will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again in peace to my father's house, then shall the Lord be my God^a.*

WHEN Isaiah saw that astonishing vision, *the Lord on a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple;* and in particular had such a magnificent display of the infinite holiness of the Deity; it ends in the most profound humiliation of soul. *Wo is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips^b.*

THE like may be noted of Stephen, who when he saw heaven opened, and Christ standing on the right-hand of God, it ended in the solemn resignation of his soul to his Saviour, and a pathetic prayer for the forgiveness of his murderers^c.

2dly. I am no way satisfied in my own mind, that this is agreeable to the sense of the verses following; viz. that he was in danger of growing proud.

HE speaks freely of his glorying in infirmities; but it was in such infirmities (and it was only in such) that were ordained and sanctified to his humiliation, and which made

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him

^a Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.

^b Isa. vi. 1—5.

^c Acts vii. 56—60.

him still more fit for the service of his Lord and master.

3dly. It doth not appear with any satisfactory evidence from scripture, that visions of this kind are of such a soul-exalting nature; whatever effects other visions might have on the graceless*; these are nothing to the purpose.

JOHN in his vision twice worshipped the angel, an instance of his human weakness it is allowed; but that it was none of his pride is most certain^a.

AND after all that can be said in defence of the more general received opinion, this thorn in the flesh was given to St. Paul, to prevent what might possibly happen to him, and that the end of so glorious a revelation might not either be lost, or prevented, or impeded.

R E F L E C T I O N S.

1st. WHAT a change doth grace make in the believer for the better!

ST. Paul's conversion was very wonderful, Acts ix. but this we may justly say, was but the beginning of wonders; his life, his labours, his sufferings, his graces, his supports, his deliverances, his consolations, were all wonderful. Strange life and advancement from being the agent of a company of persecutors,

* Such as Balaam's, who saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, having his eyes open. Numb. xxiv.

^a Rev xxii 10. Chap. xxii. 9.

secutors, and from being a dupe to a band of murderers, to be company for angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

THIS honour have all the saints, though they do not enjoy alike, clear manifestations of the divine favour, or have alike sensible enjoyment of the first fruits of the heavenly Canaan. This is gloriously illustrated, Heb. xii. for the consolation of the suffering saints. *Ye are not come to the Mount Sinai, but to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.*

PRODIGIOUS change! from death to life, from darkness to light, from sin to grace, from earth to heaven. *Being made free from sin, and becoming the servants of God, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

2dly. How strongly can God support his suffering saints? and by ways and means, to us, quite unaccountable.

How little do any of the saints know of the extent of these gospel-expressions, *Strong consolation, Everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace?* When Satan and his messengers are pouring in their fire in its full

fury, God doth, and will pour into them such strong consolations, that all their infernal enemies shall not be able to gainsay ^a.

HAPPY souls for whom an exalted Saviour undertakes! *He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him* ^a. He is both the guardian of their persons, and their best interest, their graces and their comforts; and *because he liveth, they shall live also* ^b.

3dly. How widely different is the judgment of God, and the approbation of mortal men?

ST. Paul, before his conversion was a man of credit, a man of learning, a man of importance among the Jews; but after his being called by grace, the popular outcry was, *away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live* ^c. The apostles and primitive believers in Christ, were a public spectacle, a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and persecutions, the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things; and yet, that seemingly mean despicable mortal, Paul, must be taken up to the third heaven; and shewn a prospect of the glories of the upper world. Does the spirit and grace of Christ dwell in us, the Holy Ghost, witness with our spirits that we are the Sons of God? it ought then to be of small concern to us, what an ignorant, ill-natured world thinks, or says of us.

4thly. How near are the children of God
to

^a Heb. vii. 25. ^b John xiv. 19. ^c Acts xxii. 21.

to heaven, in the present life; much nearer than they themselves, oftentimes, think of?

THE partition of flesh and blood, thin as it really is, and liable every hour to dissolution, yet this intervention is constantly found to be exceedingly darkening to the human mind: and beside this, there are a multitude of circumstances in life, which serve to darken our prospect, and set it farther off from our apprehension than it really is.

IF St. Paul had this vision in the temple at his first visiting the apostles at Jerusalem, about three years after his conversion, as some think*; we may from thence learn that though it may be many years before the soul of a believer is actually released from the body, and taken up to glory, yet Christ can let down heaven into his bosom: thus it was with St. Paul, and this hath been the happy experience of many believers, and what hath been to others, may possibly be the happiness of many more. Since the God of grace, and of all consolation is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

WHEN St. Paul was sent out by his Lord and master, as a sheep among ravening wolves; this strong cordial was provided for him on his commission to carry the gospel among barbarous pagans and licentious idolators, and he travelled in the strength of it many days: but as we have no prospect of ever
going

* Flavel on the Immortality of the Soul.

going through such trials and persecutions, we cannot so reasonably expect equal indulgences. But if this should never be in the present life, all will be filled up at last in this, *Well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*^a.

VER. 8. *For this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

In these words, are contained the second part of our subject, namely, St. Paul's behaviour under his long and grievous affliction, *the thorn in the flesh*, viz. *For this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

In this part the observations are,

Obs. 1. THAT sharp and trying afflictions are often made the means of quickening our approaches to a throne of grace.

At first thought one might be apt to imagine, why so much need of such a vast variety of means and methods, to awaken attention, and keep up our application to a throne of grace? In temporal cases we do not find it so, nor any thing like it. Where is found an able, a generous, a constant friend, whose heart, and hand, are always open to relieve the poor, the indigent, his door will seldom want a throng about it; a person in want, neglecting so fair an opportunity, would be censured, as one of the most ungrateful of all mortals. As we are now upon applica-
tion

^a Matt. xxv. 23.

tion to a throne of grace, that sinners may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, among the graceless, though this is common, it is no more than what may be expected. The full soul loatheth the honeycomb. They that are whole need not the physician; but that this criminal coldness, and neglect should be so frequently found among the saints, the people of God, the most obliged creatures under heaven, is of all things most wonderful.

AND still that soul-wants, and necessities should be so much less felt than temporal, may give a just occasion of great thoughtfulness, and humiliation. If fruitful seasons in the field fail, we are soon sensible of the dearness of corn; if trade falls off, we soon complain; if our health fails us, if distempers, pains, and disorders grow upon us, we shall soon let our friends know how it is with us; but our souls decline from day to day, and our God seldom hears from us any more than in the common and ordinary course of prayer; but let some fore temporal afflictions seize upon us, they begin to startle and awaken us out of our lethargy.

THE Lord well knows this weakness, this depravity still remaining in the hearts of his people, and therefore saith, *I will return unto my place, in their trouble they will seek me early*^a. See this also affectingly displayed by the psalmist in the temper of the Israelites in the

^a Hof. v. 15.

the wilderness. *When he slew them, then they trusted in him, and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their salvation*^a. Would not any one have thought that when *they were fed with the corn of heaven*, when men did eat angels food, then had been the time for them to have remembered that the *high God was their Redeemer*?

THUS it is with us, more or less almost continually, so that if we do but rightly consider, what our hearts are, and what we deserve from the hand of God, we need not so much wonder that we are so often, and so much afflicted, as that we are ever free.

Obs. 2. In order to keep up our diligence, and fervency in prayer, God often suffers our afflictions to lie long and heavy upon us. St. Paul *besought the Lord thrice*, a certain number of times being put for an uncertain: i. e. as much as to say, I besought the Lord over and over, again and again, *that the thorn in the flesh might depart from me*.

WHILE sharp afflictions are upon us, our spirits, for the most part keep awake; but as soon as the smart begins to wear off, we find our spirit begins to flutter and wander, again: this futility of mind, we cannot but be conscious of, if we have in us, any spark of living experience; and yet to our dying day we can hardly bring ourselves to a fixed persuasion that we are so; how apt are we still to think that if we were delivered out of this
great

^a Psal. lxxviii. 34, 35.

great distress, we would then praise our God as long as we live, and bless him as long as ever we have being: *Deliverance comes: we sing his praise: and soon forget his works* *.

WE are hardly, in any thing, more apt to be mistaken than here; like the sick or wounded under painful operations or sharp medicines, the diseased are apt to think it high time to remove them long before the skilful physician sees proper to have it so: we cannot help thinking that because we are in some degree sensible of our past ill conduct; are humbled at the feet of God upon the account of it, and are more frequent at a throne of grace than formerly, the affliction should be removed; all this may be true, and so far your soul-cure is in a fair way, and yet to the sight of Christ, who searcheth your hearts as your soul-physician, the work may not be near done.

ONE great end, therefore, why afflictions lie so long, and so heavy upon us, is, not only that our souls may be awakened and reclaimed, and also kept up more constantly to our duty; but that we may have impressed upon our souls, the importance of having daily and continual supplies, afresh from a throne of grace: were this happy end once brought about, we should soon find either the burden of our cross lighten, or we should find such supports and consolations as to say, *we joy in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh*

* Psal. cvi. 11, 12.

worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, that maketh not ashamed^a.

Obs. 3. THAT in case trying painful afflictions continue long, it is indulged to the saints to beseech the Lord, that their pains may be removed; or *that the thorn may depart from them.*

NEITHER the law of nature, nor the bonds of christianity, oblige any to lay aside their tender sentiments or sensations of afflictions, as Job exclaims in his distress, *is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh brass^b?* The gospel doth not shut up the mouths of the afflicted saints: they may complain to God, though not of him.

IN Christ's example we have the most perfect pattern, and in his precepts the most perfect rule to direct us in the present case; in his blessed directory of prayer, it is, *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:* which sense is not to be restrained to our praying against Satan's evil suggestions; though that be true, and doubtless we ought to pray constantly to be delivered from them; but it teaches us to pray that God would of his abundant goodness keep us from overwhelming afflictions, as much as we have need to pray for any divine blessing in any of our affairs in life.

NEVER was any thing of more consequence than the sufferings of Christ, nor any thing ever more immoveably decreed, and yet with
holy

^a Rom. v. 3.

^b Job vi. 12.

holy ardour of soul he cries to his heavenly father, *Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me^a.*

NATURE seems as though it found some kind of ease in venting itself in strong cries. Christ in the *days of his flesh poured out his supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death^b*: and in this way, though he were a son, yet, learned he obedience by the things which he suffered^c.

The tender hearted parent will not stifle the cries of the child while under the rod, while at the same time he is immoveably determined severely to correct him.

WHAT shall I here say! the afflictions of the saints, are oftentimes made the vehicles of their graces; and as it were through groans, sighs, and a flood of tears, they make their way to heaven, with much more rapidity than formerly. This compendious way the psalmist seems to have found. *Lord all my desire is before thee, and my groanings are not hid from thee^d.* Now, like Elias of old they pray earnestly, *they pray in prayer*: through extraordinary supplies of grace given in, their souls are enlarged more and more.

THE Lord not only permits, but indulges their complaints; "shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him,

^a Matt. xxvi. 39.

^b Heb. v. 7.

^c Ver. 8.

^d Psal. xxxviii. 9.

him, though he bear long with them? I tell you he will avenge them speedily!" Let not the people of God think, because their afflictions are not removed, that, therefore, their intreaties are not heard. Since still the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.

Obs. 4. Though we have leave given to pray earnestly for deliverance from afflictions, yet, the time, the way, and manner of it, must be left entirely to God.

"CALL upon me, saith the Lord, in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." But this is all as to that part.

A PRESCRIBING, dictating temper, in prayer, as it is highly affronting, both to the authority, and the wisdom of God; so also it has been often found exceeding dangerous: many of the children of God have, in the end, paid dear for this impiety. Shall a mortal man be more just, or have a more just, and equitable way of thinking *than God*? Shall a mortal man think himself *wiser than his maker*^b? *Behold he is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Behold he removeth the earth out of his place, and the pillars thereof tremble*^c.

WHAT a happy mind was the psalmist at last brought to? how deeply, and how justly ashamed of his bold arraignment of the dispensations

^a Psal. l. 15.

^b Job iv. 17.

^c Job ix. 4.

penalties of the Almighty? *so foolish and ignorant was I; I was even like a beast before thee^a. Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in matters, or in things that are too high for me. Behold I have behaved, and quieted my soul as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child^b.*

THAT the people of God should leave all their affairs, at all events, with him, there is all possible reason for it; nor can there be one just, or safe reason against it.

CAN any concerns you have in life, be in a better hand than his, who laid down his life for you, who hath loved you and washed you from your sins in his own blood?

^a Psal. lxxiii. 22.

^b Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2.



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W. N. (194) S. E. R.

S E R M O N VI.

St. Paul's Temptation, and his
Support under it; with the di-
vine Reasons for it.

2 C O R. xii. 9.

*And he said unto me, my grace is suffi-
cient for thee: for my strength is made
perfect in weakness, &c.*

IN this verse are to be considered,
1st. THE person answering, viz. the Lord
Jesus Christ, whom he had so earnestly be-
sought, that *the thorn in the flesh might de-
part from him*, ver. 8.

2dly. THE answer given; which is in ge-
neral terms, yet very full and comprehensive;
And he said my grace is sufficient for thee:

3dly.

3dly. A FULL and sufficient reason is given for this long and afflictive dispensation: "for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

1st. THAT it was Christ himself that gave this seasonable and important answer to Paul, is plain; because the relative pronoun (he) in the text, answers to the *Lord* in the antecedent verse, "I besought the *Lord* thrice that it might depart from me:" and moreover to remove all doubt as to this, we find Paul glories in this, that the power of Christ might rest upon him, ver. 9. More of this will be seen hereafter with the use and improvement.

THE whole of what remains to be considered and improved, in this extraordinary trial of the apostle Paul, may be comprized under the following heads.

1st. This thorn in the flesh, and the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, put him upon frequent and importunate prayer. *For this I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me.*

2dly. This importunate prayer found a most merciful and suitable answer. *And he said my grace is sufficient for thee.*

3dly. This gracious answer is established upon such divine reason as is most weighty and powerful. *For my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

4thly. THE apostle's soul was wrought over to a hearty acquiescence with this reason given for the divine dispensation. "Most gladly there-

fore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

THIS he farther amplifies, and enlarges upon, ver. 10.

"THEREFORE I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak then am I strong."

To accommodate this experience of the apostle in our text, as far as may be agreeable to that of believers in later ages, and of more private characters we may observe:

1st. THAT sometimes, such is the will of God, that in soul-cases the believer's mind shall be suddenly changed from light and joy to deep and extreme darkness.

THIS is to the people of God no uncommon experience; for as one well noteth, as the saints joys are supernatural, so are their sorrows*; and carnal men are no more able to judge of the one than they are of the other. Lord, saith David, *by thy favour, thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst bide thy face and I was troubled*^a. These extraordinary variations of soul have no determinate rule, either as to their time, their rise, their degree, or the length of their continuance; although more commonly, these extraordinary elevations and depressions are found among the younger sort of converts, and more frequently upon, or soon after, their

* Dr. Manton on Psal. cxix. 28.

^a Psal. xxx. 7.

their taking upon them the public profession of the name and ways of Christ: *old things are lately passed away, and all things are become new^a*: all is in a manner wonderful and marvellous; anon these high floods subside, their joys decline, and shades begin insensibly to overspread their minds, which, at last thicken, and condense, as one may say, into a solemn, awful and impenetrable gloom.

FROM whatever causes this may proceed, and to whatever degree this soul-darkness may rise; yet still we have in the gospel some general rules to guide our faith by; so that though in spiritual, as in providential cases, though clouds and darkness are about the Almighty, so as to veil the reasons of his dispensations from our frail minds; yet *still justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne^b*: *all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth towards them that fear him, and he keepeth covenant for ever^c*.

2dly. THAT when the people of God are thus brought into a state of darkness, and disconsolation; they are suffered to continue long in that melancholy situation, without their having any sensible answer given to their prayers and intreaties.

WHAT a heart-melting, heart-aching complaint does the church pour out to God while in the Chaldean-captivity! *He hath bedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my*

O 3

chain

^a 2 Cor. v. 17.

^b Psal. xcvi. 2.

^c Psal. xxv. 10.

*chain heavy. He hath enclosed my ways with
hewn stone: he hath made my paths crooked.
Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my
prayer. He hath filled me with bitterness, he
hath made me drunken with wormwood. Thou
hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our
prayer should not pass through^a.*

THIS soul-darkness, which proceeds from
the hiding of God's face, or from the suspen-
sion of the manifestation of divine love, is,
of all things, exceedingly afflictive and griev-
ous; and it must needs be so, and grace can
never judge otherwise, since the loving kind-
ness of God is better than life; so the spouse
complained: *I opened to my beloved, but my
beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone:
my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but
I could not find him: I called him, but he gave
me no answer^b.*

Now it is no uncommon thing for provi-
dential darkness, and soul-darkness to meet
together. *Save me, O God, saith the psalmist,
for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink
in deep mire where there is no standing, I am
come into deep waters, where the floods over-
flow me^c.* To these may be added, Psal. xxiii.
1, 2. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken
me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and
from the words of my roaring? O my God, I
cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and
in the night season, and am not silent. But thou
art*

^a Lam. iii. 7, 8, 15, 44.

^b Song. v. 6.

^c Psal. lxxix. 1, 2.

art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

AND this last place, where the psalmist so honourably, and so righteously, gives to God the glory of his holiness in these dark dispensations, may well serve as a transition to our next head.

3dly. WHEN at last, after a long time, and many cries and tears, an answer comes; but when it comes, it is not a direct, an immediate one, but rather as one may say an oblique one: Paul besought the Lord thrice that the thorn in the flesh and the messenger of Satan might depart from him; but instead of that *the Lord said unto him my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

WE will then, for the farther illustration of our present subject, propose three questions.

1st. WHY does the Lord so frequently suffer his people's frame of mind to change so suddenly, and so surprisngly, to change, from light and joy, to extreme darkness?

2dly. If the saints must, all of them, one way or other, more or less, have still some *thorn in the flesh, and the messenger of Satan to buffet them*; why are they left to cry to the Lord so long, again and again, before they have any answer?

3dly. WHEN an answer comes, why is it an oblique, or an indirect one?

Now upon a more close and strict enquiry, it will be found that in this answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

1st. This assurance, *my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*, will fully justify the holiness, the truth, and faithfulness of God, in giving to his people painful, thorny, afflictive, dispensations.

In these words of Christ to his servant he seems, as it were, to give him light into the reason of this affliction.

To flesh and sense it might seem strange that so eminent a servant as Paul was, an apostle extraordinary, and on whom the grace of God was not bestowed in vain, and who laboured more abundantly than they all; that he must be thus long and tediously afflicted, must have something in it extraordinary. Lord, said a pious servant of Christ once under great exercises, *I dare not deny that I am thy child; but why so many rods?* But when the end of God, as a covenant-God, as a God of Grace, is made to appear, and when the conviction comes home, with power, and with internal evidence, faith is made to embrace it; though the carnal part will still recoil, and reluctate. And in this he expresses his full satisfaction, that by this means the power of Christ was made to appear to rest upon him.

F E A R

F E A R not, saith the Lord, *for I am with thee, be not dismayed I am thy God*; and flesh and sense are apt to say with Gideon, if the Lord be with me, why is it thus? Behold, is there any sorrow like my sorrow, is there any case like mine, any thorn in the flesh like mine? Is this the way that God dealeth with his own children? are these lashes, the pledges of adoption, the tokens of special love? Yes they are O believer! and God's design is to convince thee of it in the sequel; and will let thee know that as certainly, as without Christ you can do nothing, so by his grace and strength, you can do all things. He not only will enable you, in some measure, to perform your duty, so that you may, in some measure, be kept on in a course of religious duties; but he can, and will glorify the omnipotence of his grace in mere weakness, and will do all for thee, O christian, where thou canst do nothing at all.

Do any ask for proofs, for instances of this? a believer may and frequently doth sin himself into soul-darkness, and distress, through heedlessness and neglect, but he cannot help himself out again. *My iniquities, saith David, have gone over mine head, as an heavy burden, too heavy for me*^a. Thus do believers bring burdens upon themselves; but they cannot of themselves, or by any power of their own, remove them; by wilful sin, or omitted duties, they bring guilt upon their own conscience, but they

^a Psal. xxxviii. 4, 5, 6.

they cannot by any power, or strength of their own, make fresh application of the blood of Jesus: They grieve the Holy Spirit, even when they are indulged in some good measure with peace and comfort, and when the Holy Spirit seems, as a comforter, on the point of sealing their adoption; but they cannot by any power, or labour of their own, recall him back again.

A BELIEVER cannot bear the cross, with true christian-fortitude, without special, and extraordinary supplies of grace. Such extraordinary supplies Paul, in our text, needed, and such extraordinary assistance he had; and what was his great blessing as well as his duty, he was on all occasions convinced of it, and heartily willing to own it, and to give to Christ the whole glory of it: and as he himself lived wholly upon supplies of grace, he studiously, and earnestly, exhorts, and persuades others to do so also: to the Philippians he writes, *In Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not that I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished, wherein also ye were careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content; "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound, every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and* to

to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ that strengthneth me, I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus^a."

THUS Paul lived by faith for his patient endurance of worldly crosses, straits, and necessities; and for a thankful and diligent improvement of providential mercies; and in his example was verified the christian maxim. *As faith (true faith) realizeth things that are not seen, so it makes the best of things that are^b.*

A BELIEVER loses, he hardly knows how, his more lively exercises of grace; he sinks away into cold fits of spiritual deadness and faintings of soul; but he cannot revive and recover his life and vigour of soul, but must wait for and pray for the returns of the Holy Spirit. *Awake, thou North wind, and come thou South, and blow upon my Garden^c. Cast me not away from thy presence, O God, nor take thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joys of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit^d.*

Now in these respects the strength and power of divine grace shine forth in their glory, as for example.

THE strength, the power, the continuance of the manifestation of pardoning and forgiving

^a Phil. iv. 10, — 19. ^b Heb. xi. 1. Gal. ii. 20.
^c Song. iv. 16. ^d Psal. li. 11, 12,

ing love, which works its way to us over and above all our sins and unworthiness; not only over our mere frailties and weaknesses, but over our sins against light and knowledge: for who living in such cases dare avow his innocence^a?

The strength and power of God is seen in giving, sustaining, and supporting grace, so that the christian is not swallowed up with overmuch heaviness. *The high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, he dwelleth with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For the Lord will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth: for the spirit would fail before him, and the souls which he hath made^b.*

By these means also are seen, the power of restoring and recovering grace; by these means souls are restored, and led in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake^c:

This seems most beautifully illustrated in the case of Ephraim: I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; *Surely thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God^d.*

AND still further how happily does this end, not only in his being brought back again with deep repentance, and reformation, but also

^a Job ix. 28—32

^b Isa. lvii. 15, 16.

^c Psal. xxiii. 3.

^d Jer. xxxi. 18—20.

also in the renewed manifestation of divine love, and with new seals of adoption. *Is Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord*.*

To these ends then, that the soul may be effectually humbled at the feet of God, he often gives them a thorn in the flesh, and thereby shows their weakness, and his own all-sufficiency; their natural weakness and his power to help in time of distress; their sinful weakness, and the power of his arm which alone bringeth salvation.

Much to the purpose is the saying of the philosopher, God regards good men in a different view from that of the rest of mankind: our slaves, saith he, we regard their manner and behaviour but little, so that our common work is done by them; but our children whom we train up for an honourable and important life, we keep under strict and severe discipline†.

Thus a wise and gracious God (while the rest of the world *having more than heart can wish*^a, live at large,) he is training up his sons for the glories of immortality, under sharp

* A lively instance this of the mercy and grace of God expressed *more hominum* after the manner of men†

† Seneca.

^a Psal. lxxiii. 7.

sharp and severe discipline. *Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word*. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right*, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

2dly. *THIS* assurance, *my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*, will fully justify God's dealing with his people, when he suffers them to lie long under affliction; and to pour out many a complaint to him, and, as yet, gives them no immediate answer.

BEHOLD, saith the Lord, *I have refined you, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction^b.*

THIS text, if justly understood, will teach us three very important truths, and each much to the present purpose.

THE affliction here, figuratively referred to, seems to be the furnace of the Chaldean-captivity, that long captivity of seventy years: the end proposed by it is their refinement; and this end is in so many express words insured and ascertained. *I have refined thee; the text, and intenseness of it are limited; I have refined thee, but not with silver*: finally, special grace and mercy shine in the midst, and through the whole of this dreadful dispensation.

* Psal. cxix. 67, 75.

* Righteousness, i. e. in the abstract righteousness itself; as righteous, just, and good, as righteousness itself can be.

^b Isa. xlvi. 10.

penfation. *I have chofen thee in the furnace of affliction*; fee this further explained and illustrated by the figure of the good figs in Jeremiah*. *Thus faith the Lord God of Israel, like thefe good figs, fo will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have fent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.*

HEREIN appear much divine wifdom, love, and mercy; God chufes his people for the furnace, and he chufes and fits a furnace for them. *No affliction for the prefent is joyous, but grievous.* It is no rod that does not caufe fmart; it is no affliction that is not painful and diftrefling. And (*with reverence*) it is no affliction in the hand of God, as a God in covenant, as a God of grace, that does not either prevent, or cure fome foul-evil, or brighten, promote, or improve fome heavenly grace. It is no furnace that hath not fufficient heat to melt down the metal, and drive out the dross from it.

AND this expreffion. *I have chofen thee in the furnace of affliction*, answers exactly to Paul's cafe, when the Lord faid to him, *my grace is fufficient for thee*; fhould he give to his people a thorn in the flefh, and provide no balfam for the wound; fhould he let the melfenger of Satan loofe upon them to buffet them, and then leave them to fhift for themfelves, without affurances of fufficient grace and ftrength; they would be, during the prefent

* Jer. xxiv. 5.

sent life, extremely miserable: for were it possible for Satan, that cruel enemy of souls, to feel any relentings for the miseries of poor suffering mortals, whatever might be supposed in any other case; he would have no pity on these whom divine grace has made the open and avowed enemies of his kingdom and interest: no, he would come upon them like an enraged tyrant, formerly driven from his throne, with double fury: he knows them of old as traytors and rebels upon record, and he would deal with them accordingly.

BUT when we consider almighty power, almighty grace, as engaged for their help, and assistance, and that the end shall be their improvement in grace, and holiness, and finally the exaltation of the glory of God; it most inexpressibly alters the nature of the thing, and puts quite another appearance on it.

SHOULD any one see a surgeon cutting and wounding his patient, and still going on with his painful, distressing operation, calmly, and without the least apparent emotion; undisturbed, unmoved with those groans, and cries which the hearts of others cannot endure; what would an ignorant person think of it? But when the end is known, and it is seen with what consummate skill, and judgment he goes through the whole design; his mind would then be quite changed, and he could not do otherwise, than love and admire him
for

for his generous care, goodness, and usefulness.

3dly, *THIS* answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee*, will justify the dealings of God with his people; though he should not give an immediate and direct answer to their prayers in the way and manner that they expected.

ALTHOUGH a wise and gracious God does not meet with his people, so as to answer them just in the line and track of their petitions; yet he answers them in the main, as to the principal scope, and drift of their desires; which are the glory of God, and the spiritual good, and welfare of their souls.

ALL true prayers are directed, and influenced by the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of grace, and supplication, must turn upon these two main points, and always do; and therefore all deliverances as to their time and manner, are but circumstances which are to be subjected, and entirely conducted unto these two ends above-mentioned.

Now as these can only lie in the hands of God alone, they ought to be left with him accordingly.

THESE principles being laid down, we may observe that the answer in hand is full to the purpose, and virtually includes all that is pleaded for in prayer.

As to afflictions themselves, considered in their own simple nature, some indeed may be much heavier, much sharper, and of much longer continuance than others; and nature,

in these respects, cannot think otherwise of them than, in a degree, as they are; but the main thing we ought to regard, is the hand of God from whom they come, and the gracious end and design of him therein: this the apostle had full in the views of his faith; and this, by renewed supplies of grace, carried him through the whole. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose^a.*

AND further it does not so much affect our main interest, when we are to have the answer of our prayers, or whether more openly and directly, or not, as what the answer is when we have it. The deliverance will come at last; we have it abundantly assured to us in the word of God. *Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart^b. They that go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them^c.*

JOINING then these two together, the promise of *sufficient strength according to the day^d*, and a certain, final, and everlasting deliverance out of all; how richly, and how abundantly is the saint provided for, against all afflictions, and assaults whatever? He cannot be put into the furnace before the decreed, the appointed time: and when he is in the furnace, and all the time he is there, God

^a Rom. viii. 28.

^b Psal. xcvi. 11.

^c Psal. cxxvi. 6.

^d Deut. xxxiii. 25.

God is still plying him with new communications of strength, support, and assistance*: How fully does this vindicate the sovereignty of God in not answering the prayers of his people, just when and how they expected?

BUT, to make this point still more evident, I will consider the clause at the end of the verse: *That the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

THIS expression is of the same import with the former, and in substance intends the same thing: for the power or the strength of Christ to be made perfect in weakness, is for it to be made manifest, or evident^a. So here, for the power of Christ to rest upon him means the same thing; only as this manner of expression will give some further advantage to our subject, in some part of our meditations, I will here consider and improve them.

THE word which we have in the text, and which we render *rest*, others read *inkabit*, or dwell with†: we have the same word, John i. 14. *The word was made flesh and dwelt, or tabernacled among us.* And we have a text

P 2

much

* Mal. iii. 3. He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. See also Dan. xi. 35. Chap. xii. 10.

^a James ii. 22.

† *Ut tanquam in tabernaculo inhabitet*, i. e. ut magis ac magis sentiam virtutem Christi. Nam quo sunt nostra tabernacula infirmiora, eo magis elucet in illis Christi virtus; quum nullis periculis, aut laboribus frangantur ut supra est Beza in loc. 4. 7.

much to the same purpose, 1 Pet. iv. 14.
 “ If ye are reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye, for the spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon you ;” or a spiritual glory, or the glorious spirit of God resteth upon you. Here we will consider

1st. How the strength, and power of Christ is made manifest in the weaknesses, and infirmities of the saints.

2dly. How it is made glorious, or exalted thereby; and point out some peculiar circumstances and seasons of its illustration, or when it shines forth with more singular glory.

1. How is the power of Christ manifested in the weaknesses and infirmities of the saints? and this is done two ways ;

1st. In respect to the sufferings themselves.

2dly. In respect to their own frame and disposition of mind under their afflictions.

1. As to the afflictions themselves, the power of Christ is made manifest four ways.

1st. THE power of Christ is manifested in keeping back the afflictions of the saints, till the precisely appointed hour.

WHEN Christ was on the point of his ascension into heaven, he supports the special commission, given to his apostles, with this assurance, *All power in heaven, and in earth, is given unto me.* All power in the moral, and in the natural, and material world, are in the hand of Christ, and are absolutely under his controul : of this he gave abundant proof, during his continuance on earth, among men.

He

He saith unto his disciples, why are ye afraid? O ye of little faith? Then he arose and rebuked the seas, and there was a great calm^a. He rebuked the evil spirit, and he left the possessed immediately^b. He rebuked the fever and immediately the sick recover^c. These and many other things are abundant proofs of Christ's absolute power over all created beings, and over all things; and in them there is abundant argument for faith to rest upon, as to any affliction whatever.

CHRIST'S enemies could not lay hands on him, because his hour was not yet come^d: and with this our Lord upbraids his enemies, I was daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not; but the scripture must be fulfilled^e. And the only reason is elsewhere assigned, viz. no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

MIRACLES, it's true, are now ceased; but if deliverances from imminent death, and other near impending calamities is not immediate and instantaneous; yet the present sanctification, and a full, final, and everlasting deliverance are sure and certain.

In this case may be further noted our Lord's words to his disciples, as also to his enemies. When certain of the Pharisees told him^f, *Get thee out, depart hence; for Herod will kill thee*; "Go, saith he, tell that fox, Behold

P 3

I cast

^a Matt. viii. 26.

^b Mark i. 25, 26.

^c Matt. viii. 14, 15.

^d John vii. 30.

^e Mark xiv. 49.

^f Luke xiii. 31, 32.

I cast out devils, and do cures to day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem*." The import seems to be, that as the prophet, the Messiah, the appointed, and sent of God, Herod had no power over him: nor indeed, absolutely, over any prophet or minister, commissioned and sent of God: *No prophet can perish out of Jerusalem*, i. e. not in any other place but where God wills; or any sooner, or before he has finished his ministry.

Much to the same purpose are the words of our Lord to his disciples, John xi. 8, 9, 10. Christ makes a motion to his disciples for going again into Judea: ver. 7. to this they object. *Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?* To which our Lord answers, *Are there not twelve hours in the day? if any man walketh in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world; but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him*^a.

As to Christ himself, while here on earth, during the whole arduous work of impetration, he walked as in the full sun-shine, as he had the Holy Spirit in him without measure; so that he had all his work lying evidently before

* Christ was decreed to die at Jerusalem, not in Galilee.

^a John xi. 9, 10.

fore him, and he knew, to an hour, what time was decreed for him to finish his work in, and when he should complete it; so that, as to the Jews attempting to stone him, it all appeared to him no more than mere impotent malice.

To apply this, "O christian! be it your
 " care (and may grace enable you) to keep
 " within the more evident rules of your du-
 " ty; and leave the rest to your Saviour:
 " and where things may, as sometimes they
 " will, appear dark and dubious; or some-
 " what, as to the event, hazardous; where
 " you cannot see, Christ sees for you; he can
 " either seasonably warn you of the danger;
 " or he can give you light, and wisdom to
 " avoid it; or he can, if it must come, pre-
 " serve you in it; he can sanctify it to you,
 " and guide you safe through it. Know that
 " while Christ lived on earth, as a man of
 " sorrows, and acquainted with grief, he
 " lived for thee, as certainly as he died for
 " thee; as he died for thy redemption, he
 " lived for thy sanctification and preservation
 " in a state of grace, and perseverance there-
 " in; and in this respect because he liveth
 " you shall live also^a. *Be this then your*
 " *Theban shield! so that with this in death, you*
 " are more than conquerors; and in the mean
 " time, so long as Christ hath any more work
 " to do, either in you, by you, or for you,
 " you are for the time immortal."

P 4

2dly.

^a John xiv. 19.

2dly, CHRIST makes his power manifest in repressing, and keeping in the heat and violence of the affliction.

THE furnace can burn no further, nor fiercer, nor longer than by his permission. *He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way for you to escape, that you may be able to bear it^a.*

IN measure he debateth with it; he stayeth the rough wind in the day of the East wind^b. He puts a mean, a medium into all the sorrows of his people; now this he often does in such a way as that his people may by certain signs, and circumstances see the mitigation is from his hand alone.

SEVERAL things of this kind are to be observed, in what our Lord sent to the angel of the church of Philadelphia; Christ writes himself, *he that bath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth^c*: much to the same effect St. Paul writes to the Corinthians. *I will tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost. For a great door is opened unto me, and effectual, and there are many adversaries^d.* If Christ openeth an effectual door of grace, all the powers of darkness cannot shut it; and if Christ bind Satan himself a thousand years, and shut him up, he cannot move till the time is expired; and then when he is let loose,
it

^a 1 Cor. x. 13.

^b Isa. xxvii. 8.

^c Rev. iii. 7.

^d 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9.

it is but for a short season^a. *Because, faith Christ, to the faithful Philadelphians, thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

To the church of Smyrna he sends this important assurance, full of divine grace and consolation. *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: Behold Satan shall cast some of you into prison. Not all of you, or just whom he will, but such as I permit, that ye may be tried; not that ye may be destroyed; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; not for ever, nor as long as Satan will: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

3dly. The power of Christ is made manifest in conducting all the circumstances of things, so as to make things end in his glory, and in the good of their immortal souls.

AFFLICTION cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground^b. As affliction cannot come without his knowledge, so it cannot come without his leave; and it shall not come to his children without his grace: *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent^c.* Afflictions of themselves have no power to produce special grace; all this comes from the God of all grace; and of all divine comforts. *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be*

^a Rev. ii. 10.

^b Job v. 6.

^c Rev. iii. 19.

be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin^a.

CHRIST, as the great soul-physician, weighs out every grain of the most bitter potion that his people, in this life, receive; and adapts it most exactly to the circumstances of their present weak and sickly constitution; and gives life and energy to the whole of its operation.

4thly. THE power of Christ is made manifest in removing the affliction, just in the due and proper season.

THE Lord kept the Israelites in the iron furnace of Egypt exactly to a day, and sent them out at the punctillious hour^b. The Lord releases his suffering children each at the determined hour; exactly when it ought to be, when each affliction has by his hand, and by his blessing, done its office. Affliction if not removed by the hand of a merciful, and gracious God, would still lie like a dead weight upon them; Satan and his messengers would, if permitted, push every calamity upon them for ever, with unrelenting cruelty; but they can no more withstand Almighty power, than storms, winds, and tempests, can resist his will. Hitherto shall they go and no further. *Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of*

^a Isa. xxvii. 9.

^b Exod. xii. 40, 41, 42.

of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks^a.

MANY are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all^b.

When the appointed hour is come, the church, and every individual member of it which compose the whole, shall by the same power, and with the same infinite love, and omnipotence rise out of the depth of trouble; as the new-made world arose, at the creation, out of the dark bosom of the ocean, when the Almighty said, *let there be light, and it was so^c. Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come^d.*

2. The power of Christ is made manifest in several things, as to the frame and behaviour of the people of God, while under their afflictions.

1st. THE power of the grace of Christ is made manifest in keeping down, and effectually suppressing reluctant and unruly passions in them.

THOUGH the blessing of adoption brings with it a little present grace, and the hope of future glory; it neither removes present miseries, nor destroys at present their painful sensations: and furthermore, regeneration itself only suppresses indwelling corruptions, but it doth not destroy their inbeing utterly; this the saints find by experience to their no small grief

^a Isa. x. 12.

^b Psal. xxxiv. 19,

^c Gen. i. 3.

^d Psal. cii. 13.

grief and sorrow: and as they are sensible of the working of an evil heart in them, still inclining them to depart from the living God, the fountain of all blessedness; they also find that every change in life is apt to give some advantage to it; or in other words, sin in them will, from every changing scene in life find some occasion to discover its contrariety to the glory of God. Ease and tranquillity is apt to produce indolence, crosses and adversity fretfulness and discontent; although it be so certain, that many of the children of God have trod the thorny path before them, and have in many respects suffered much longer, and much more deeply than ever they did: thus do they dwell in thought upon their present crosses, neglectful of their manifold mercies, till there rises more than half a storm within; this often obliges them to betake themselves to fervent prayer, that the Lord would allay the inward tempest, and here they find a gracious answer. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul^a.*

In cases of this nature, christians often find that of themselves, they can do nothing, to assuage their inward grief, and against and above all their greatest and most solid reasoning from the absolute sovereignty of God: *he performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him^b. The counsel*

^a Psal. cxxxviii. 3.

^b Job xxiii. 13. 14.

counsel of the Lord endureth for ever, and the purpose of his heart to all generations^a. He is of one mind, and who can turn him, and what his soul desireth that he doth; all these reasonings and many more, are the lot of mankind; the desert of sin, &c. true and just as they are in themselves, for the present, avail nothing, as to bringing over the mind to a calm acquiescence with the divine will; for this I say, they are often obliged to pray hard, and be very frequent and urgent at a throne of grace.

THE water in a vial that stands unmoved, may look very transparent, almost as clear as crystal, but let it be once shaken, and it were odds, if some degree of foul sediment does not rise from the bottom.

AMONG moral agents, while a rich and generous benefactor continually keeps on loading his poor indigent, whom he loves as his friend, with new favours all goes on easily and smoothly; but let the former find fault with some instances of his conduct, let his visits be less frequent, and his presents be but seldom, and those more slender than formerly; it would be no strange thing (notwithstanding the just reasons he has for his alteration of carriage) if some hard thought should rise within, of hard and unkind treatment, if there were not some sour and disrespectful speeches.

THIS

^a Psal. xxxiii. 11.

THIS is what I apprehend the very bottom of Job's case, that mirror of patience, that unparalleled example of piety; all that Satan and his messengers could invent or do, for a long time, could not move in him any unquiet agitations of soul. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*^a.

AFTER all this, there was one thing hitherto untried, improved by Satan; and, to the spirit of Job himself, in a great measure unexperienced: the friends of Job, judging by the more common rules and methods of divine providence (especially in those early ages) and seeing him to be, upon the whole, an unprecedented instance of misery, and distress; they charge him, in many instances (merely on presumption) with hypocrisy and impiety.

AND what is highly probable, gave rise to the long and bitter altercation between him and his friends, was his opening his mouth and cursing the day of his birth, Chap. iii. This awakened the spirit of Eliphaz, who was seconded by his friends, in their turn, in this long dispute. See Chap. v. &c.

AND so high did their accusations rise, built upon this mistaken hypothesis; that he was but, upon the whole, a hypocrite unmasked, and that God dealt with him accordingly: and since they had gone such lengths,

^a Job i. 21, 22.

lengths, with their presumption, as to insinuate that he had in him some remains of the temper of the old tyrants, *who were overthrown with the flood*^a; no wonder then, if they should add to all this their imagination, *that he had cast off fear, and that he restrained prayer before God*^b: This last charge cut him to the very soul; and as they still persisted in it, and kept on, urging him with it, it at last, got the mastery of his patience for a time.

For Eliphaz to advise a man in Job's circumstances, or indeed, any one under affliction, *to seek unto God*, and unto God to commit his cause^c, was doubtless very just, very good, very seasonable, and pious; but to have it insinuated that because *his children had sinned against God, God had cast them away for their transgression*^d. * This was a very hard, very cutting, and in strictness, was an unjustifiable presumption; but more to charge him positively with *casting off fear, and restraining prayer before God*; and to still keep urging that, *surely if he were pure, God would awake for him, and make the habitation of his righteousness prosperous*; that is, *in case Job would seek to God betimes, and make his supplication to the Almighty*^e.

AT

^a Job xxii. 5—17. ^b Chap. xv. 4. ^c Chap. v. 8.
^d Chap. viii. 4.

* That is, for some notorious, enormous, wickedness.

^e Job viii. 5, 6.

At length Elihu appears, awakened, as it seems, by observing that Job's three friends had condemned him in the gross, without any thing sufficiently proving their charges; while Job himself, on the other hand, had in his fits of discontent, more than once thrown out sideways, as we say, some freedoms reflecting on the sovereignty of God; or rather though he both owned and acknowledged the absolute sovereignty of God, yet does not allow sufficient room for the honour of his mercy and compassion to his creatures in distress; only because God did not then arise and vindicate his cause for him, which he himself thought to be good and capable of an ample vindication.

THIS leads Elihu, after a very warm and animated introduction into the very spirit of the thing^a, by resolving the whole dispensation of providence into the sovereign will of the great creator, and superintendent of the universe.—I will answer thee, *that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters*, Chap. xxxiii. 12, 13.

AND after all, though this put an end to the dispute, and might silence Job; yet he appears not to be effectually humbled, 'till God himself by a supernatural revelation, answered him out of the whirlwind^b, and reasoned
the

^a See this at large, Chapters 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.
^b Job chapters 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

the case with him; and this did the work effectually, and to purpose.

—*BEHOLD, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth: once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further. I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be with-holden from thee.—— I have uttered things that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.*

Q. D. “Lord God, thou who art the God
“of the spirits of all flesh^a, in whose hand is
“the soul of every living thing, and the
“breath of all mankind^b? I humbly acknow-
“ledge before thee, with sincere grief, shame,
“and deep repentance, that I have too many
“times fretfully, hastily, inconsiderately,
“and ignorantly, reflected on the glory of
“thine infinite perfections, thy wisdom, thy
“truth, thy justice, in the sovereign dispen-
“sations of thy providence: not a word
“more, O my God! dare I offer in my own
“justification.”

THIS paraphrase seems to represent, in some sort, the contents of Job's confession, who had been twice summoned. *Gird up thy loins like a man, I will demand of thee, and declare*

Q

thou

^a Numb. xvi. 22.

^b Job xii. 10.

thou unto me^a, and twice charged with *bidding and darkening counsel by words without knowledge, with contending with the Almighty*, as though he would reprove him and instruct him.

SO far, so exceedingly far are narrow-minded mortals from being able, by searching to find out God, from finding out the Almighty to perfection^b! So little, so very little, do the very best of men know, comparatively, of the weakness, and depravity of their own nature!

2. THE power of Christ is magnified in raising in afflicted tempted saints, holy, ardent, longing, desires after the advancement of the glory of God, in, and by their sufferings.

THUS the Lord carries on his own gracious work upon their souls gradually, successfully, and regularly, by silencing their inward cavils, by allaying their mutinous fears and complaints, and then filling them with a growing zeal for the advancement of the glory of Christ in the world; zeal for the honour and glory of Christ is, in the present life, weak and imperfect, rises and falls, grows and decays, as other graces do.

ACCORDING to the common rules of judging one would be apt to conclude, that zeal, and desire after the glory of Christ should flourish most in a time of temporal peace and prosperity; and doubtless it would if it were a natural production, and were there nothing to oppose it; but since those in whom this zeal for the advancement of the glory of Christ

^a Job xi. 2. 7.

^b Chap. xi. 7.

Christ in the world are born from above, and as such, their temper, their views, their aims, their end, their desires and expectations are heavenly, it does not appear so; at least it doth not shine so apparently, as in times of trial, and in times of particular temptation and opposition: thus this grace, like a heavenly star, sparkles most in a cold, frosty, winter-midnight.

FORMERLY the christian lived more in generals, but now he is brought to a more close and home application of things, between God and his own soul; which is indeed one of the very highest ends of God's dispensation of grace, by means of the gospel: never does the praying soul so well understand the import of that petition as now he does, *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*: this lesson he learns most effectually in a time of deep affliction; for now he sees, not only that carnal, graceless, godless professors are the real enemies of the cross of Christ; but that his own heart, if left to itself, is as bad as the worst of them all: from hence the Lord takes occasion, by his sovereign grace, to awaken his zeal, love, and affection for the glory of his Redeemer more than ever. Now he sees not more occasion to wonder that heathens, and the prophane, who call themselves christians, should rebel against the light of their own conscience, and hold the truth in unrighteousness, than that an evil and depraved principle, still residing within,

should take part even with the Devil and Anti-christ in dishonouring the Lord Jesus. This gives the truly humbled, mortified believer, great pain and uneasiness. It much affects him to find so much reluctance, so many hard thoughts and heart-risings against the authority of his blessed Saviour; or that any repining, disputing thoughts, should remain within against the government of Christ; or that there should be any hesitation remaining within, whether his lord and master should immediately take the final and everlasting government of him, both heart, and soul, and life, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace^a: whose yoke is easy, and his burden light^b.

THE reclaimed penitent is now brought to this, Lord, not my will but thine be done. The cup which my father hath given me shall I not drink it? "hath my blessed Saviour washed me with his blood, clothed me with his righteousness, sanctified me by his spirit, fed me out of the alms-basket of his bounty, delivered me from my dangers, and guards me still with his kind providence, and shall I still dispute his title to me, in me and over me? may I inwardly, experimentally, powerfully know him in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his sufferings, and may I be more conformed to his death."

IN

^a Prov. iii. 17.^b Matt. xi. 30.

IN this sort then is the power of Christ made manifest in the weakness and infirmity of the saints; in raising such powerful ardent wishings, such fervent longings, and strivings after the manifestation of his glory, against all opposition, both inward and outward; which all the powers of mere nature, and natural reason cannot produce, allowing them their utmost scope and advantage.

3dly. CHRIST manifests his power in giving in and applying suitable promises, when as to the outward circumstances of things, all appears to them nothing but darkness round about them.

It is, in this case, granted that all imaginable advantages, as to the outward appearance of things, cannot assist faith, so as to draw it out into exercise; faith itself being the free gift of God^a, and Christ himself both the object, the author, and finisher of it^b. As to this *faith of the operation of God*^c, the soul can no more believe in Christ in times of outward tranquility and peace, than in the times of outward storms and tempest; nevertheless the more apparent opposition is raised against the fulfilment of the promise, the more does the power of God shine in enabling it to believe. Thus Abraham beheld by faith an all-sufficient God, who could raise the dead, and call things that were not yet in existence, with as much certainty of the event,

Q 3

^a Ephes. ii. 8.
Ephes. i. 19.

^b Heb. xii. 2.

^c Col. ii. 12.

event, as though they were already in being; to this God did his faith look, and on his almighty power did all his hope rely, as being fully perswaded that whatever he had promised he was able to perform^a. Thus did his faith triumph over all outwardly apparent opposition, believing still in the word of a faithful God who had promised him a son when past age; in this faith did he in full intention sacrifice him against all the tenderest sentiments of nature, and to all present appearance against the promise itself, *in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*; and finally against all his raised hopes and expectations of having a posterity as numberless as the stars of heaven; his perswasion still persisting, that in case Isaac was indeed to be sacrificed, an almighty all-faithful God was able to raise him from the dead.

LEAVING, in these extraordinary cases, atheists, deists, and infidels to cavil on their own way; others may enquire, what is this to the present argument, since miracles and prophecy are now no more? To this I reply,

Our subject is not a miraculous faith, but that which, in kind, and nature all true believers have*. I will therefore endeavour to illustrate this by two or three examples:

THE

^a Rom. iv. Heb. xi.

* Hence is Abraham called the father of us all, Rom. iv. 16. i. e. a pattern and example of true faith.

THE very first lesson that is taught in the school of Christ, is : *If any man will be my disciple let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow me, saith Christ*^a. A mortifying idea this, a candidate for martyrdom, going to the place appointed for execution, carrying his gibbet upon his shoulder ! True, in our more peaceable, happy days, we see no near prospect of a bloody death ; but nevertheless every true christian must, if he will follow Christ, and hopes to be owned by him at the last day, undergo a spiritual, voluntary crucifixion. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*^b.

THUS at the hour of the soul's first coming to Christ, by faith, he gives up his carnal lusts, carnal appetite, carnal will, carnal pleasures, and self-righteousness to be crucified ; but while he voluntarily gives up these carnal joys, carnal pleasures, and carnal gratifications to be sacrificed, he, by faith, receives in the room of them, such joys and pleasures that are purely spiritual : *he that drinketh of the water that Christ giveth, shall thirst no more as formerly : he is a new creature, old things are passed away, and to him all things are become new*^c.

It sometimes happens that one who truly fears God, has the present mortification to suffer in his character, as a christian, or as a

Q 4

professor

^a Matt. xvi. 24. Luke xiv. 26, 27. ^b Gal. v. 24.
^c 2 Cor. v. 17.

professor of the name, and ways of Christ; and thereupon the messengers of Satan are let loose to buffet him: with scandal and infamy, they bear exceeding hard upon his reputation; his enemies, and the enemies of Christ and the gospel, seem as though they would carry all before them: *Report, say they, and we will report it*^a. * All seem afraid of his cause and desert his vindication; *at my first answer no man stood with me, I pray God it be not laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known*^b. *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me*^c. At such distressing seasons as these, are sometimes conveyed to their minds with surprizing life and energy, like a heart-felt cordial to a fainting, dying man: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God*^d. *Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.*

OR it may be that one who truly fears God may be sunk into deep poverty, and may have no present prospect of a comfortable subsistence

^a Jer. xx. 10.

^b This seemed remarkably good Jeremiah's case, as is plain, both from his life and prophecy.

^c 2 Tim iv. 16, 17. ^d Epist. i. 1, 15. ^e Psal. xlii. 11,

sistence for himself and family; at such a season it may be brought to his mind with great power, "trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed:" and now he in a fort, in hope, believeth against hope, i. e. against all present discouragements. "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread*." In such instances as these, is seen that the faith and trust of the saints rests upon the power, grace, and goodness of God alone, unsupported, unassisted by any human prospects whatever. To these scriptures I subjoin, as a practical use.

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God^a."

4thly. THE power of Christ is made manifest in the weakness of the saints, by enabling them to go through and bear up under such difficulties, and dangers, which they durst not look in the face in a time of profound peace and tranquility.

OUR blessed Saviour while he was upon earth, as a bridegroom with the church militant; his wisdom and goodness did not see it convenient for his disciples to anticipate distresses and dangers: to those who asked^b why his

* See Dr. Gill's excellent notes on Psal. xxxvii. 25.

^a Isa. l. 10. ^b See Matt. ix. 14—17.

his disciples did not fast as the disciples of John, and the Pharisees did? his answer is in shewing the impropriety of their fasting, while he, their lord and master, was yet with them, and the farther inconveniency of it, it being rather hurtful and dangerous than beneficial, before the proper season; it being like putting a new piece of cloth into an old garment, or like putting new strong wine into old decayed bottles: and as they had left all to follow him, he promonishes them in a particular manner, as most suitable to that hard service he had in view for them, and which he was training them up for, not to take thought for to-morrow what to eat, or what to put on; and when he sent them out on their first expedition, not to take with them gold, silver, nor scrip with them, nor to premeditate what to answer when brought before the judgment-seat of infidels: *for, saith he, it shall be given you in that same hour, even a mouth and wisdom that all your enemies shall not be able to gainsay*^a.

THE people of God are apt to think thus within themselves, how could my heart endure, or my hand be strong in such exceeding distressing circumstances that some good people have been in? but let such think, at the same time, that Jesus Christ, their redeemer, is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; and that as such he will still preserve his church under all its trials and distresses.

^a Matt. x. 19, 20.

Luke xxi. 14, 15.

treffes. This is his chosen work in which he will be singularly glorified; in these he will make it be fully known, that the weakness of God, i. e. such instruments and means as they call weak and foolish, shall in his wisdom, and by his strength prove wiser and stronger than carnal men, with all their boasted wit and valour. The cause they are engaged in is his cause, and he will give them both grace and strength accordingly. The glory of God, the honour of Christ, the salvation of the church, and every individual member of it, are so interwoven, the one with the other, that all the powers of darkness, combined together, can never part them.

WHEN good king Aſa had before his eyes, the tremendous army of a million of Ethiopians, he addreſſes himſelf to his God in this moſt pathetic manner; *O Lord it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we reſt on thee, and in thy name we go againſt this multitude: O Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail againſt thee*?

THIS inſtance of Aſa was indeed upon the whole extraordinary; his faith, his zeal, his courage, were all extraordinary; his danger was extraordinary, and the answer of his prayer was extraordinary, and ſingular; but after all, this was but a temporal caſe, as to the outward circumſtances, and the answer was

was in kind a temporal deliverance^{*}; but we who live under the gospel, are under a more peculiarly spiritual dispensation, and are called up more particularly to spiritual exercises of mind and purity of life, than was then in those doctrines commonly known in the church of God. *Let us therefore be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. For we wrestle not with flesh and blood; not with an army of idolatrous pagan infidels, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places^{a*}.*

AND that you may by no means be discouraged, know, O christian, that this heavenly-mindedness, this purity of heart and life, which the carnal world dreads, is both your real honour and highest privilege: *To be spiritually minded is life and peace^b.* Bless God for all the means and methods of his providence, which he is graciously pleased both to ordain and bless to the sanctification of your souls^c, and for the making you *meet for the inheritance of the saints in light^d.* This was St. Paul's comfort, and his joy in all his tribulation^e.

* Read Chap. xv. former part, Chap. xvi. latter part.

^a Ephes. vi. 10—12. * Wicked spirits, margin.

^b Rom. viii. 6.

^c 1 Thess. iv. 3.

^d Col. i. 12.

^e Rom. v. 3.

S E R M O N VII.

The Glory of Christ in his
Intercession.

JOHN. xvii. 24.

*Father, I will that they also whom thou
hast given me, be with me where I am,
that they may behold my glory, which
thou hast given me: for thou lovedst
me before the foundation of the world.*

THERE seems to be an evident con-
nection from the beginning of the 13th
chapter of this gospel to the end of the 17th
chapter, where our text is: and what is more
remarkable, is the peculiar manner in which
this affecting narrative (and as it may be called
Christ's

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Christ's farewell sermon*, with his prayer at the end of it) is introduced.

NOW before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, (the devil having put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him) Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.

If this 17th chapter of St. John be considered by us, as holding forth to us a compendious short view of Christ's intercession for his church and chosen people, the four former chapters may be considered as an introductory key to it; especially the three first verses of the 13th chapter above-mentioned, and still relating to some one or other important branch of the same subject, as may be seen by comparing the one with the other; as
for

* Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you—Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you, if ye loved me ye would rejoice; because I said unto you, I go unto my father,—and now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it cometh to pass, ye might believe. —Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the father: as the father gave commandment so I do. Chap. xiv. 27—31.

for example. *When Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, Chap. xiii. 1. These words spake Jesus and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father the hour is come, Chap. xvii. 1. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands—Chap. xiii. 3. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him, Chap. xvii. 2.—The devil having put it into the heart of Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him—Chap. xiii. 2.—Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, Chap. xvii. 12.—knowing that he was come from God—Chap. xiii. 3. As thou hast sent me into the world, so also I have sent them into the world, Chap. xvii. 18.—and went to God, Chap. xiii. 3.—I come to thee: Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, Chap. xvii. 11*.*

IN the three first verses of this 17th chapter, are three things particularly observable.

First, CHRIST'S petition.

FATHER the hour is come, glorify thy son. The hour is come, i. e. when, according to ancient

* Though the manner in which I have placed these scriptures, with their abbreviations, may seem to make the reading somewhat rough and abrupt; yet I apprehend, that this will be in some measure compensated by the light that this connection will serve to cast upon the whole subject when taken together.

tient prophefy, he was to answer to his own free and voluntary covenant-engagement. *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God^a.* This he came now to do actually, and in person; and what that will of God was, is fully implied in the words immediately before; *burnt-offerings and offerings for sin thou hast not required; but a body hast thou prepared me^b:* and for what end that body was prepared, is plainly represented elsewhere, viz. to obey perfectly the law of God, to fulfil all righteousness, to magnify the law, and make it honourable, to finish transgression, and make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for transgression, to seal up the vision and prophefy; and that he, as the most holy might be anointed of God the Father, with the Holy Spirit without measure^c. And finally that he might confirm the covenant with many.

GLORIFY thy son, &c. The glory of Christ, as God, his glory as the mediator of the new covenant, his glory as the Messiah, the anointed and sent of God were at this time under a dark cloud: there had been some beamings forth of this glory of his, at his baptism, and at his transfiguration, but then few, very few in comparison, beheld it. *For he came unto his own, and these received him not^d.* In the mean time *a few believed on his name;* and while *the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst them, they beheld his glory*
as

^a Psal. xl. 6. ^b Heb. x. 6, &c. ^c Dan. ix. 24, 27. John iii. 34. ^d Chap. i. 11—14.

as the glory of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth. But now the time was near at hand, when this glory of Christ so long promised of God the father, and by covenant, insured to him, was to break forth, as the sun when it shineth in its strength^a.

THAT thy son also may glorify thee. Christ had before prayed, *Father glorify thy name;* and had received an immediate answer, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* And what this glorifying the name of God his heavenly Father was, is plain from the next words; *Jesus answered, and said, this voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (This he spake signifying what death he should die^b.)*

In this place may be observed the speech of Caiaphas, the then high-priest, with the comment of the holy evangelist upon it. “Ye
“ know nothing at all, nor consider that it
“ is expedient for us, that one man should
“ die for the people, and that the whole na-
“ tion perish not.” *And this he spake not of himself: but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation. And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad^c.*

R 2dly.

^a Mal. iv. 2

^b John xii. 28—33.

^c Chap. xii. 49—52.

adly. We have the argument by which this claim is supported.

AS thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

To this agree the many promises, predictions, oaths, and asseverations made to Christ, in prophecy, under the Old Testament, e. g. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?—I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion, I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel^a. The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right-hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool^b. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion, rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedech." Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people, I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. With whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. I will beat down*

^a Psal. ii. 1—9.

^b Psal. ex. 1—4.

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down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right-hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. And I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore: and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven^a.

To these may be added, *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied—because he hath poured out his soul unto death:—he bore the sins of many—and made intercession for the transgressors^b.*

3dly. We have an account what that eternal life is which Christ is authorized and appointed of God the father to give unto as many as the father had given to him.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God. and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

In this third verse is observable, the near and inseparable connection there is between the true knowledge of God the father, and of Jesus Christ his son, whom he hath sent; the

R 2

authority

^a Psal. lxxxix. 19—29.

^b Isa. liii. 10—12.

authority and power Christ hath from God his father to give this knowledge; his engagements so to do; and its limitation, to as many as the father hath given to him.

As to the connection there is between the true knowledge of God the father, and Christ the mediator and redeemer; it appears evident from Christ's own words, that where the one is wanting, there is not the other; whatever pretensions may be made to it, in opposition, as polytheism or the worship of many Gods.

THE Samaritans professed to worship the one only living and true God; and yet Christ tells the woman of Samaria, *ye worship ye know not what^a. O righteous Father (saith Christ) the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me^b.*

AND the main body of the jewish nation were quite ignorant of the knowledge of God the Father's mind, and will, in sending Christ into the world to redeem sinners with his blood. And this will appear yet more evident from many other concurrent places of scripture. *Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. And what our blessed Saviour adds, agreeth exactly with the words in hand: All things are delivered to me*
of

^a John iv. 22.

^b Chap. xvii, 25.

of my Father: and no man knoweth who the son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the son, and he to whom the son will reveal him^a.

AND this our Lord's authority and delegation; thus to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given to him, is not slight and transiently mentioned, but abundantly asserted, and vindicated through the whole of his ministry, while here on earth; and much of this is to be found in the 10th chapter of this gospel of John; where, besides his laying down his life for his sheep, as the price of their redemption; and which no one else had either power or authority to do; he proves his mission to be divine, by the invincible efficacy that his call had on the hearts of some of his hearers; while, at the same time others remained deaf and obstinate to the last degree. *He that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out; and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice, and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers^b.*

AND in the process of the same chapter, the Jews crowding about Christ, as inquisitive after truth, and yet, in their hearts, never wishing to find it, cavil; *How long dost thou*

R 3

bold

^a Luke x. 21. 22.

^b John x. 2—5

*hold us in suspense**, if thou be the Christ tell us plainly. To which he gave them for answer, "I told you, and ye believed me not: the works that I do, in my Father's name, they bear witness of me; but ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of his hand. I and my Father are one."

As to the limitation in the last clause, *To as many as thou hast given him*: there is so much of this to be seen in the whole of Christ's ministry, while he was here on earth; and even in his last sacramental-supper, wherein are these words, *This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins*^a; that there is no need of enlargement on this head, in this place.

FROM the whole, viz. from the beginning of Chap. xv. to the end of Chap. xvii. as compared with other parts of the sacred scriptures, may be collected the following propositions.

PROPOSITION I.

THAT the covenant of grace between God the Father, and God the Son, in eternity, includes

* John x. 24. margin.

^a Matt. xxvi. 28.

cludes the whole salvation of the elect of God in its full compass; so that nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it: *He is the rock, his work is perfect*^a:

In this view, this covenant may justly be called *a covenant of grace*, in the fullest, and most complete sense of the word *grace*; since the contracting parties negotiate all in grace.

PROPOSITION II.

As the Lord Jesus Christ is the proper and only mediator of this covenant; (which, for its peculiar excellence, utility, and perfection, is called, *a new and better covenant, established on better promises*^b;) as Christ is the mediator of this covenant, he stands engaged to see all these blessings of grace contained in it, secured, applied, and perfected; whether they pertain to present grace, or to future glory^c.

PROPOSITION III.

THE redemption-purchase of Christ includes in it exactly all the names, character, and circumstances of the elect that are enrolled in this eternal covenant: from hence it is called, (for emphasis,) *the book of life written from the foundation of the world*^d; and hence, at the last day, it will be said by Christ, to those on his right-hand, *Come ye blessed of my Father,*

R 4

inherit

^a Dent. xxxii. 4. Matt. xvi. 18.

^b Heb. viii. 6.

^c Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

^d Rev. xvii. 8.

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world^a.

PROPOSITION IV.

THE intercession of Christ, as established on the atonement he hath made for sin by the sacrifice of himself, is fully, and for ever prevalent to procure every blessing, both of present grace, and future glory, for all those for whom he hath undertaken. *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck^b. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them^c.*

PROPOSITION V.

FROM hence also it follows, that according to the method established between God the Father, and God the Son, The holy and eternal Spirit, the third person in the ever adorable trinity, proceeds from the Father and the Son to apply effectually and for ever, all the saving benefits of Christ's death to all the chosen, the elect of God.

1st. **T**HE Holy Spirit, as a sanctifying spirit proceeds in the way of special grace from God the Father.

*W*HEN the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that turn from transgression in

^a Matt. xxv. 34. ^b Psal. cx. 4. ^c Heb. vii. 25.

in Jacob, saith the Lord^a. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my spirit that is upon thee, and the words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever. Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law^b. The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord^c.

2dly. THE holy spirit, as a spirit of special grace, proceeds from Christ the mediator.

— I TELL you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment^d. The law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death^e. If any
man

^a Isa. lix. 19, 20, 21.

^b Luke iv. 18, 19.

^c Rom. viii. 2, 9.

^d Chap. xlii. 1, 2—4.

^e John xvi. 7, 8.

man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

3dly. IN a covenant-way, the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father, and from Christ the mediator.

WHEN the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his son made of a woman, made under the law. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.*

WHICH introduction brings us to verse the 24th.

“FATHER, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” In the words are

1st. THE persons for whom Christ prays, viz. *them whom the Father hath given to him.*

2dly. THE blessing prayed for, *that they whom the Father hath given to him, may be with him where he is.*

3dly. THE special end of Christ is here given, why the blessed redeemer so much desires, and so much insisteth upon it, that those given to him, may be with him where he is, viz. *that they may (there) behold his glory.*

1st. THE persons here prayed for, *they whom the Father had given to him.*

How

* Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6.

How often do we find these words in this chapter, and what stress does Christ put upon them. With this he begins, as authorized by his heavenly Father, *to give eternal life to them, i. e. to all them, whom he hath given him?* with this he proceeds, by asserting and proving his exact punctuality in performing this part of his covenant-engagement. *I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world.—I have given them thy words, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me*. i. e. “by his saving illumination he had given them to know God, his heavenly Father, as the only true God, and himself as the sent of God into the world, to work out their salvation; and in that saving knowledge they had of him, they had from him the first beginning and earnest of eternal life.”

It is also expressed as a farther demonstration of the same happy truth, that this their knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ the sent of God, was of the right kind, because it had an abiding in them; it was to them *an ingrafted word; or word mixed with faith in them that heard it. They have kept thy word*^b.

FURTHERMORE, Christ declares that it was through his power that they still continued, and persevered in the belief of that word which

^a John xvii. 8.

^b Ver. 6.

which they had at first received from him. *Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled^a: and the great change and durable effects which this given word had upon their souls, their hearts, and lives, had so changed their inmost disposition; and had so assimilated them to the image of their Saviour, that it made them the objects of the world's hatred. I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world^b.*

FINALLY, such was the will of Christ, who knew the whole counsel of God, his heavenly Father, even from eternity, to put into this compendious prayer both a mark of limitation, and a mark of explanation. *I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them^c.—Neither pray I for those alone, but for those also who shall believe on me through their word^d.*

FROM hence to the end of the 24th verse, the various requests of Christ to God his Father, seem to be gathering up to one point. Thus,

“ I PRAY not for the world, but for those
 “ whom thou hast given me—I pray for all
 “ those, *comprehensively*, whom thou hast given

^a John xvii. 12.

^b Ver. 14.

^c Ver. 9, 10.

^d Ver. 20.

“ven me, who shall hereafter believe on me
 “through their word. *I pray* that they all
 “may be one, as thou father art in me and
 “I in thee; and the glory which thou gavest
 “me I have given them, that they may all
 “be one, even as we are one. I in them,
 “and thou in me, that they may be made
 “perfect in me; and that the world may
 “know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved
 “them as thou hast loved me.”

FROM hence three things are to be noted in Christ's intercession, particularly regarding the gracious work and operation of the holy spirit.

1st. THAT one of the main ends of the holy spirit's work on the saints as a life-giving spirit, and in it giving them the first dawn of *eternal life*, as before noted, is, *that they all may be one*; i. e. all of one mind, of one spirit, of one and the same heavenly temper and disposition; according to that glorious model which was in the eternal mind before the world began. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.*

2dly. CHRIST prays that this oneness and uniformity of grace in them, might extend its happy influence far and wide in the world, to the edification and establishment of such
 who

who either had then, or should hereafter believe, and to the eternal confutation of the finally impenitent. *That the world may know that thou hast sent me; and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*

3dly. WHEN this is added, *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one*, the clause imports that all the saints, though they are made all to drink into one spirit; yet in the present life, this oneness of mind and gracious temper of soul is but in its infancy; but in heaven, where Christ now is, and where he prays that *they may be with him*, this oneness shall be finally and for ever perfect.

THIS oneness here prayed for by Christ, St. Paul supposeth to be love, which (as one of the precious graces of the holy spirit) is a blossom of eternity. "Charity never faileth" — *we, here, know but in part—now we see through a glass darkly; then shall we see face to face*: and what St. John writes is full to our present subject. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

BELOVED, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he appeareth we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is^b.

IN the words of Christ, *Those whom thou hast*

^a 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

^b 1 John iii. 1, 2, 3.

hast given me, are connected all the foregoing links that compose the chain of salvation.

THOSE who were given to Christ, in the covenant of grace, were given to him that he should give unto them eternal life, i. e. eternal salvation : a complete one in all the parts and branches of it.

To this blessed end ; this oneness, and perfect conformity to the image of Christ, they are after their conversion still tending ; for it is the fixed and unchangeable will of God the Father, and of Christ the mediator, that at last they all shall be for ever with him, that they may behold his glory ; and in this view, God the Father *loved Christ* as the mediator ; and his people in him, *before the foundation of the world*.

2dly. IN the text is contained the blessing prayed for, viz. *That those given to Christ may be with him where he is*.

THE humble, incarnate Saviour, was now like a great prince out upon his travel incognito into a far country, upon affairs of vast importance for public good. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*.

IN a yet nearer view, considering him as on the point of his last sufferings, our Saviour seems like a captain-general, or generalissimo, abroad upon an arduous and bloody expedition, for the defence, and final settlement of his kingdom *which was not of this world*^a ;
and

^a John xviii. 36.

and as here making a most pathetic prayer at the head of his army: on the success of this his now near, and close engagement with Satan, sin and death, depended the everlasting happiness of the whole church, from one end of the world to the other, through all the successive ages of time, from righteous Abel, even to the final consummation of all things.

AND it is highly reasonable to believe, that the blessed redeemer, was, at this time, full of the certain expectation of a happy end of this his so dreadful, yet glorious undertaking. *This was the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame, viz. the prospect he had of his sitting down at the right-hand of the throne of God.*

AND yet there are many, who are by covenant given to him, many who are by purchase, the sheep of his flock, for whom he laid down his life, who are not yet with him where he now is to behold his glory; many of these compose the body of the church militant, and many more shall, after being made willing, by the power of his grace: all these, with numbers yet unborn, shall in their time, enter as volunteers into his service, as under him, as the captain of their salvation, to fight against sin, Satan, and the world; all these, even a number which no man can number, even all these are included in this intercession,

Father

* Heb. xii. 2.

Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.

AGAIN, there is a sense in which Christ is with his church now: *lo, I am with you alway to the end of the world^a: where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I^b:* but this is not a local, a corporal presence: for while gracious souls *are in the body, they are absent from the Lord^c.* And therefore in the more lively exercises of faith, and ardours of divine love, *they are willing rather to be absent from the body, that they may be present with the Lord.* They, on their part, at times and seasons, find an experimental and more inwardly sensible nearness to God; *it is found good for them thus to draw nigh to God^d.*

BUT this is not their being with Christ which we are enquiring for in our text. Therefore,

3dly. IN the text is contained the reason why Christ so much desires, and insisteth on it; that those given to him may be with him where he is, viz. that there they may *behold his glory.*

THE words glory and glorious are terms well known, and in common use, are designed to express the superior excellence of one thing as distinguishing it from another.

IN the firmament, *there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another*
glory

^a Matt. xxviii. 20.

^b Chap. xviii. 20.

^c 2 Cor. v. 6.

^d Psal. lxxiii. 28.

glory of the stars, even one star differeth from another star in glory^a.

AMONG intelligent beings, every superior talent or qualification whereby one excels another, is called his glory. *The glory of young men is their strength*; i. e. their ability of body, and of animal spirits to sustain the toils, and fatigues of business: *The glory of old men is grey hairs^b*; i. e. solidity of judgment and long experience of a variety of instances in cases of both men and things: and even among these there are many different degrees; and almost as many different views and apprehensions of them; and so it is like to continue as long as time endures, and the world continues in its present situation.

BUT as to the glory of Christ, it is beyond all other glory; and in many respects, a quite different glory from what was ever seen before, in either world; and such as the like will never be seen again to all eternity.

WE read that Christ is the brightness of glory, i. e. of the Father's, and the express image of his person^c.

AND here also it may be further assisting to our after-meditations, to note that the glory of Christ, which is our more peculiar subject, is the glory of Christ; that glory which is peculiar and appropriate to himself alone, as the head of the covenant of grace, and mercy: it is a glory given to him by special design and decree from God the Father in eternity;

^a 1 Cor. xv. 41.

^b Prov. xx. 29.

^c Heb. i. 3.

eternity; and though the glory of God the Father, and of Christ, are inseparable, yet the glory which Christ here prays for is, in its kind and nature, well distinguished from the former.

CHRIST's answer to Philip seems much to our present purpose. *Shew us the Father, saith he, and it sufficeth us.* To which our Lord gives for answer, *Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works. Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works sake.^a*

WELL might St. Paul say, *great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh^b.* This was with him a point indisputable, whatever low thoughts the world might form about it: in the person of Christ, as God and man, and in the offices which he executeth in that complex character, of a mediator; is comprehended the very highest manifestation of all the perfections of deity, that ever were, or can be seen, or known by any mere creatures, men or angels, even to all eternity. *Which things the angels desire to look into^c.*

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IN

^a John xiv. 8—12.^b 1 Tim. iii. 16.^c 1 Pet. i. 12.

IN order to bring this subject to that particular point of light, in which I purpose. I shall consider,

1st. WHAT may be more comprehensively called the glory of Christ.

2dly. THE manner in which this glory may be supposed to be beheld, by those for whom Christ here prays; and add some instructive observations.

As to the first of these, viz. the glory of Christ in his mediatorial character; in him is the glory of the deity made known, both in the works of creation, providence and grace. To him are committed the reins of universal government; *all power in heaven, and in earth is given to him^a*. He is the Lord of angels; *principalities and powers are subject to him^b*. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords^c. By him kings reign and princes decree justice: and finally, *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the son, that all men might honour the son, as they honour the Father^d*.

CHRIST being chosen of God the Father, *to be the head of all things unto the church^e*, and that this most important design might be carried fully into execution, so as that it might in no point miscarry; it was resolved upon in the eternal mind, that the son of God, the eternal WORD, should *be made flesh, and*

^a Matt. xxviii. 18. ^b 1 Pet. iii. 23. ^c Rev. xiv. 16. Ephes. iii. 10. Col. i. 16. Prov. 8. 15.
^d John v. 22, 23. ^e Ephes. i. 22, 23.

and dwell among men^a, i. e. "by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul*"; that so, in him, all the divine decrees might be laid open, *which before were hid in God*^b; and before, to all created beings, unknown.

ACCORDING to St. John's Vision, this opening of the seals is ascribed to Christ, and as done in full assembly. *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth*^c.

AND, that eternal glory was to be the final result, of the humiliation and death of Christ, is the general, and united language of the whole Bible, Old Testament and New, from the first promise, Gen. iii. 15. to the end of the Revelation. So, saith St. Peter, This is what the prophets of old saw at a distance; and was what engaged their closest meditation; viz. *what that prophetic spirit, which was in them, did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*: and in the same place, and on the same subject, we find the blessed spirits have been employed; *which things the angels desire to look into*^d.

S 3

ST.

^a John i. 14.

* Assembly's Catechism.

^b Ephes. iii. 9, 10, 11. Col. i. 26, 27. ^c Rev. v. 1—10, compared with Ephes. iii. 8—11.

^d 1 Pet. i. 9—12.

ST. JOHN saith, *God is light, and in him is no darknes at all*^a; and the same apostle saith, *that God is love*^b. The whole scheme, the whole entire system of salvation, from end to end, or rather from eternity to eternity, is one entire vast scene of love: "to him that hath loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory and dominion, and power, for ever: Amen"^c."

ACCORDING to this design of manifesting this love of God, every attribute of deity, even the most awful, and such as are the terror and dread of guilty creatures, are in this way glorified, while love shines through the whole procession.

THERE never was in either world, nor can be again the like example of the wrath of God, and his intense, infinite hatred against sin, as sin, than the sufferings and death of the blessed son of God; who to redeem his people was made a curse for them^d, being delivered, the just, for the unjust, to bring them to God, bearing, his own self, their sins in his own body on the tree^e. Never was the like seen of God's unchangeable determination to punish sin to the very uttermost, as in the humiliation, and death of Christ; and yet through this dark and dreadful cloud, dart beams of grace and love to miserable sinners,

^a 1 John i. 5.

^b Chap. iv. 8.

^c Rev. i. 5.

^d Gal. iii. 13.

^e 1 Pet. ii. 24.

sinners in the last hour of their extremity, as in the case of the dying thief, and as when Christ prayed for his murderers. *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do^a*. And still, through the whole progress of the gospel, while we read of the sufferings of Christ, the love of God is given to be its everlasting companion. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life^b*. God commendeth his love towards us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us^c. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin^d*: and from this, as the very highest instance of divine love, the apostle concludes most strongly, that if God did not spare his own son, but did deliver him up for us all; that with him also he will freely give us all things^e.

AND furthermore, as this is the very highest love in its effects, and final issue, that can be conceived to go forth from God, the fountain of all goodness, to his creatures; we are, in our meditations, led on to believe that God the Father in giving his only beloved son to die for us, giveth himself also. *I will be their God, and they shall be my people^f*, saith the Lord: and since it is so (in various respects) we are taught that the whole Trinity are equally in it: it was infinite love in God, the Father, to give his only begotten son to

S 4

die

^a Luke xxiii. 34. ^b John iii. 16. ^c Rom. v. 8.
^d Isa. liii. 10. ^e Rom. viii. 32. ^f Jer. xxxi. 33.

die for us; it was infinite love in Christ to lay down his life for our redemption; it was infinite condescending love in the holy spirit to become our sanctifier and comforter.

It is therefore, that those whom the Father hath given to Christ, may be with him, where he now is, to behold this glory of his love, that he in the text prays for them. This was the glory he had then in view; this was what his heart is now much set upon; it is still, and for ever in his view through the whole of his priesthood; now he is before the golden altar above, it is his will that it should be so; he came into the world, and laid down his life to shew the glory of his love, which he hath in his heart for them; and which, even in his last agonies, was stronger than death and the grave. It is for this end that he sends his holy spirit, the comforter, to glorify him by taking of this his love, as set forth in the gospel, and shewing it unto them; and in so doing to shed it abroad in their hearts, in its sacred influence, so as to engage them, body and soul, heart and life, in his service.

In one word, as to this part, it is a spiritual and intellectual glory; and as such suited to engage all the powers of a rational and immortal mind, and to fix it for ever in the most delightful contemplation.

And can any one thing be supposed equal to the manifestation of divine love, or any kind of manifestation of the divine favour, like that of Christ's dying for sinners? and his
so

to loving them, *as to wash them from their sins in his own blood?* When this revelation of the love of Christ is rightly understood, and cordially received by faith; *for it is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness^a*; it can do no less than fill the human mind *with joy unspeakable and full of glory^b*.

Observations concerning the Intercession of Christ.

O B S E R V A T I O N I.

SINCE this important branch of our Lord's priesthood, intercession is established upon that perfect obedience, which, while on earth, he yielded to the divine law, and the satisfaction he then made to divine justice, for those for whom he stood engaged; and furthermore, since an infinitely wise and holy God hath so openly given his acceptance, by raising up Christ from the dead, and setting him at his own right-hand: since all these are so abundantly declared in the New Testament, so that the truth shines forth with full evidence, with how much peace and tranquility of mind may a humble penitent sinner rest upon it, in hope of eternal life.

THE apostle, Peter, lays great stress on this argument, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus

^a Rom. x. 10.

^b 1 Pet. i. 8.

his Christ from the dead ;” and this is his manner of improving this doctrine.—*Ye know that your redemption was not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, i. e. not with any thing of a perishable nature ; but with the precious blood of Christ, i. e. with what God the creator of all things, and final judge of all things accounts precious, even when silver and gold, the most precious things in the material world, shall be doomed to an eternal annihilation by the fire of the last day ; and wherein doth further appear, the high approbation of Christ’s sacrifice ? by his raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right-hand, he gave him the glory that our faith and hope might be in God.*

AND to this may be added the argument of St. Paul, *What shall we say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ? — Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is God that justifieth : Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

CONSIDERING God the Father as the governor and judge of the world, and considering Christ in the character of a mediator, and in that of a surety ; it was of infinite importance to the glory of God, not only that divine justice should be fully satisfied, but that God

† 1 Pet. i. 18.—21.

‡ Rom. viii. 31—33, 34.

God the Father's approbation and acceptance should be made as public as possible; so as fully to establish the testimony of the gospel, and to leave the infidel without excuse.

AGAIN, as the eternal happiness of mankind depended upon the infallible truth of this testimony; so it was of the greatest consequence to the faith, hope, and comfort of the penitent sinner, that this blessed doctrine of the free forgiveness of sins, should have all the support that even faithfulness and truth itself could give it; and we find the gospel represents it accordingly. *When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely, blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee: and so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec^a.*

If

^a Heb. vi. 13—20.

If we add these things together, the two immutable things here in the Hebrews, to that of St. Peter, before-mentioned; and consider this glorification of Christ, at God's right-hand, as a seal to the whole Bible, how justly may we say, that humble penitent sinners have, in the gospel, an unshaken foundation laid, for their faith and hope in God, to rest upon?

In human cases, when a man, through default has plunged himself into extreme difficulty, so as to stand in need of a large security; when such a one is actually found, and when the difficult, embarrassed affair, is fully adjusted, not only so as to secure against the injury of either party, but to the honour of the one part, and the benefit of the other; and when at the same time, the formerly endangered person has all this under hand and seal authenticated to him, what real ground can still remain for doubt, and questioning?

OBSERVATION II.

Concerning the Intercession of Christ.

THIS consideration may be taken in here, that at the same time, that Christ is an intercessor, as an high-priest, he is also an advocate. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous^a.*

It hath been profitably noted by protestant divines, that as the character of an intercessor,

carries

carries in it the idea of his pleading upon the footing of clemency, and mercy; so that of an advocate supposes the person to argue points of law and equity: both these we have in St. John, with respect to God the Father, and Christ the mediator.—*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness^a:* and upon what footing? upon condition of our confessing our sins, and thus, making in effect, a merit, of our repentance? No, but having sinned, and having been humbled for it, we in faith put our cause into Christ's hand; *We have an advocate with the Father:* and what further? We plead that Christ is a counsel for us; he is *our advocate*, not to plead our righteousness, but his own; from hence is he emphatically called Jesus Christ *the righteous*; not simply, a righteous, a just person; but, as it behoved him, in his mediatorial character, he fulfilled all righteousness. He is, in the account of God the Father, *the righteous*, as having made reconciliation, and as having brought in an everlasting righteousness. He is *the righteous*, as having magnified the law and made it honourable, upon which account, *the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake.* He is *a just God and Saviour; both just and the justifier of the ungodly*, who believe in Jesus, as *the Lord their righteousness*; *whose righteousness alone justifieth the ungodly.*

AND

^a 1 John i. 9.

AND the difference between pleading mercy and pleading law, may be thus illustrated,

ONE who is sunk into deep poverty, or into any other distress or calamity in life, may be an object of pity; compassion, or charity, merely for mercy sake; every one is not become poor and distressed by his own extravagance or sloth; it may be his real misery, and yet not his crime that he is poor, and to want a friend; but if one wilfully makes himself miserable, especially in a capital case, the person having been proved guilty, and being under a sentence of condemnation; having forfeited his life to the laws of his country, he has, in strictness, no right to his own life, nor any sufficient ground of his own to plead for it; and therefore in such a deep dilemma, another person of character, credit, and interest must plead for him.

AND here again is to be considered, that when a criminal has his life granted him, his sovereign (in his favour) dispenses with the execution of the law, to make way for the display of princely clemency and mercy; but in the case of one that hath sinned against God, the case is far otherwise; the circumstances of things are widely different, the law of God can by no means be mitigated, or its rigour dispensed with: in this sense we understand those words, *The Lord passed by and proclaimed before him* (i. e. Moses) *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy*
for

for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty^a.

IN this same sense we understand the words of St. Paul, *God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all*^b. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him".

FINALLY when God the Father is represented as refusing sacrifices and burnt-offerings for sin; and the son as answering, "lo I come to do thy will, O God. I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart, &c." it plainly teaches us his voluntary engagement to be our surety; but being once bound as a surety, he found no release afterwards till the whole debt was paid; but this being once done, and having by his one offering purged away sin, he for ever sits down at the right-hand of God, *in full expectation of seeing all his enemies made his foot-stool*^c.

AND this blessed doctrine of Christ's being gone into the holiest of all, even into heaven itself with his own blood, is by the apostle thus improved.

"H A V I N G therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated

^a Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

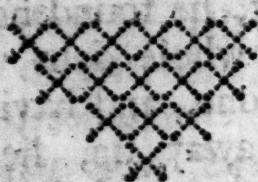
^c 2 Cor. v. 21.

^b Rom. viii. 32.

^d Heb. x. 13.

secrated for us through the vail, that is, to
 say, his flesh, and having an high-priest over
 the house of God: Let us draw near with
 a true heart, in full assurance of faith, hav-
 ing our hearts sprinkled from an evil con-
 science, and our bodies washed with pure wa-
 ter. Let us hold fast our profession without
 wavering, for he is faithful that promised *”

* Heb. x. 19—23.



S E R-

S E R M O N VIII.

The Glory of Christ in his
Love.

JOHN. xvii. 24, 25, 26.

*Father, I will that they also whom thou
hast given me, be with me where I am,
that they may behold my glory—O
righteous Father, the world hath not
known thee; but I have known thee,
and these have known that thou hast
sent me.*

*And I have declared unto them thy name,
and will declare it: that the love where-
with thou hast loved me, may be in them,
and I in them,*

THE Lord is said to speak face to face to
Moses^a; and the whole history of Moses from
his leaving the plains of Moab, to his expiring

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^a Exod. Chapters xxxii. xxxiii. xxxiv.

on mount Nebo*, may assist us, in some measure at least, to conceive the meaning of this extraordinary expression.

THE divine majesty had been most notoriously affronted by the Israelites making the golden calf at Horeb, and publicly proclaiming, *These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*; on which, the Lord said unto Moses, *I have seen this people, that it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.* In this dangerous and critical juncture, Moses, their temporary mediator and intercessor, threw himself in between them and the burning wrath of God; in the midst of all this tremendous displeasure, Moses finds the great and dreadful God surprizingly mild and pacific to himself, even so far as to say, *thou hast now found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.*

AFTER such a gracious admission, the faith of this pious, this favourite law-giver proceeds still further, *I beseech thee shew me thy glory*: as to the manifestation of the glory of God, which, doubtless, is what Moses here prays for, he saw and knew as much as any man of that age, and time; and it may be as any one believer under the Old Testament; and we may well think so, since in the addenda to the pentateuch it is said, *there arose not a prophet*

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phet like him in Israel, whom the Lord knew face to face^a: and as to predictions, types, and symbols of the divine presence, and as more particularly relating to an incarnate Saviour, who was, in due time, to be made flesh and tabernacle among men, i. e. such believers, who in their day, were to behold his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth^b. How much of this glory, Moses at such a distance might see, and what ardent intense longings of soul he might have to see, and enjoy more, no one can judge with certainty; but, upon the whole, who Moses was, and what a vast measure of light and grace he already had, yet it was still his earnest desire to see and to enjoy more, of the displays of God's grace and mercy, than he had ever yet seen or known; and as to this he had his wish granted accordingly:

*BUT though I instance this of Moses, as having in the account some circumstances very singular, and peculiarly striking; yet this is not the only place where this is to be found: we read of Isaiah's seeing his * glory, and speaking of him^c.*

THEY have done good service in the gospel-church, who have proved from many concurring scriptures of the Old Testament and New compared, that Christ was the God of the Old Testament, of which I cannot here treat at large: let the few following places suffice.

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^a Deut. xxxiv. 10.

^b John i. 14.

* That is, Christ's glory.

^c John xii. 41.

suffice. We read *that in the wilderness the people spake against God and against Moses^a*: St. Paul saith, *they tempted Christ and were destroyed of serpents^b*: and in the same chapter we read, *that they did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and they did all drink of the same spiritual drink; (for they all drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ^c)*. St. Stephen's words are, *A prophet shall the Lord raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear: this is he that was with the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him in mount Sinai, and with our Fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us^d*: to these may be added, *Moses esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt^e*.

BUT to bring this subject home, and improve it according to our main design; that however exalted the sentiments of Moses were concerning the glory of God in his clemency and mercy towards sinners; and whatever happiness he might hope to enjoy by a more near and distinct prospect of it; yet these things were beheld by the generality of the Israelitish nation, but in a very faint and weak light, as is abundantly evident from their whole history. *They sang his praise, and soon forgot his works^f. They forgot God that made*

^a Num. xxi. 5, 6.

^b 1 Cor. x. 9.

^c Chap.

x. 3.

^d Acts vii. 37, 38.

^e Heb. xi. 26.

^f Psal. cvi. 12, 13.

made them, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation. They provoked him at the sea, even at the red sea^a: and even their thanksgiving for God's mercy and favour was leavened with hypocrisy; when he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned, and enquired early after God. They remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless, they flattered him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant^b.

AND yet even then and in those ages, bad as the times were in the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, God had in reserve seven thousand who continued truly to worship him^c; and in the epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle produces a whole cloud of witnesses to the truth of divine revelation; and gives it, as the general account: *so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable; these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country, whence they come out, they might have had opportunity to have re-*

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turned;

^a Psal. cvi. 7.^c 1 Kings xix. 18.^b Psal. lxxviii. 34—37.

Rom. xi. 4.

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turned; but now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city^a.

THE apostle's design appears by his beginning with the words, *Now the just shall live by faith^b*; and is evidently to prove that the object of faith was, to the Old-Testament-saints the very same as to believers under the New; and also to prove that though Christ, who was the object of their soul's trust and dependance, was beheld by their faith at a great distance, yet was of the very same kind, and wrought the same way; producing the very same gracious effects in believers then, as it doth now; that is to say, it wrought by love, and shewed itself sincere, by duty and persevering obedience to the commands of Christ: and any impartial enquirer after truth may be satisfied of this, by considering how this argument concludes, Heb. xii. 1, 2, &c. *Where, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God.*

THE glory of the love of Christ, in thus giving himself to die upon the cross for sinners,

^a Heb. xi. 12—16.

^b Chap. x. 38, 39.

ners, is that glory which first of all strikes the renewed mind, at the convinced sinners first coming to Christ; it is this apprehended by faith, with some degree of appropriation, that draws the humbled sinner to venture upon his grace, and to trust all his whole salvation in his hand; and this discovery enters so deep into the soul, and makes such impressions, that neither time, nor change, nor the world, nor any temptation can ever after extinguish utterly: Hence is it the language of such, *none but Christ*.

LET me not be mistaken here, as though I were treating of the doctrine of assurance as essential to true faith: and yet I must own, that, I think, this doctrine of assurance, like most other doctrines of the gospel, is by many misunderstood, and by others but ill explained; for I cannot but think that many gracious souls, who conscientiously walk with God, have more of the nature of assurance in the daily exercise of their faith and devotion to God, than they themselves think of; (or at least than they dare, through excessive modesty, openly and plainly own by the name and title of assurance.)

AND further, (since I have mentioned before, the word appropriation) I am free to own, that, I think, all sensible joy and comfort, flowing from faith unfeigned, has something of the nature of assurance in it; though it may not answer to that exalted notion which saints have been commonly used to form of it.

BUT to explain myself once for all, and lay a foundation for what I have to say hereafter on the subject of the glory of Christ in his love; I repeat that scripture, I have already more than once referred to, *He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*^a.

THE Holy Spirit, at the first implantation of faith in the true convert, gives with it a disposition to look to Christ, and to depend upon him for salvation: and to invite the distressed sinner to come to Christ, and rely upon him, he reveals to him the glories of his love, grace, and mercy, as set forth in the gospel; and by that means draws forth the grace of love, which is implanted in the heart, at the same time that faith is, and may be rather called, an effect of true faith, than any thing distinctly separate from it. *It is faith that worketh by love*^b; by love to Christ first; and to the saints, who bear his image, in the second place.

ACCORDING to this, the Holy Spirit, by the gospel-word, and by gospel-ordinances, puts both faith and love into motion; and by influencing and strengthening every heavenly principle, (and love to Christ from a believing view of his love in dying for sinners, among other graces;) they are gradually transforming, *and changing more and more into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the operation of the Lord the spirit*^c.

LOVE

^a John xvi. 14. ^b Gal. v. 6. ^c 2 Cor. iii. 18.

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LOVE, when it is pure, when it is genuine, and refined from every gross alloy, is of a most marvellously assimilating nature: as therefore faith is said to work by love, and to purify the heart^a; if therefore this faith be considered as beholding, by contemplation, the love of Christ as its object, it can do no less than produce love in the soul, as St. Paul saith; *The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again: Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new^b.*

In this place, therefore, to treat of any other faith short of this, as not producing such effects, is writing about what is not at all to the purpose, as being quite foreign to the present argument; since no faith but that which the scripture calls *precious faith^c, the faith of God's elect^d, faith of the operation of God^e* can produce the like.

ERROR, enthusiasm, and superstition may produce something that looks like love to Christ, and devotion to his service; but such do but follow an ignis fatuus, they are delighted with they know not what; and they love they know not why; but these we speak of, do but indeed testify what they have seen, and

^a Acts xv. 9.

^b 2 Cor. v. 14, 15—17.

^c 2 Pet. i. 1.

^d Tit. i. 1.

^e Col. ii. 12.

and looked upon, and handled, of the word of life; and this they may most truly and safely do, since *their fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ*^a.

A meditation on the glory of of the love of Christ manifested in his condescension, Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

LET this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

BUT made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

AND being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Who was Christ? He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emphatically. *In him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily*^b. Essential deity; being possessed of all possible perfection, to which nothing can be added; from which nothing can be taken, so as in the least to diminish his blessedness. *The same yesterday, to day, and for ever*^c. *The eternal word; all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him is life*^d; and as the creator of all things, in him they live, and move, and have their being^d; so that as long as they possess existence, they

^a 1 John i. 1. 3. ^b Col. ii. 9. ^c John i. 1. 4.
^d Heb. xiii. 8.

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they continue to hold it by his will, and by his power and providence, with every thing that can any way contribute to its felicity, its goodness or its excellence.

In this view of things, every out-going of the eternal mind towards any being beside himself, so as to create it, or any way to make it happy; all such out-goings of the eternal mind, from, or beyond itself, are but as so many streams flowing from himself, who alone is the eternal immense ocean of all blessedness.

God is said to have *set his glory above the heavens*^a; and *the heaven of heavens cannot contain it*^b, or comprehend it; *for he is above all blessing and praise*^c. As the sun, when it shines out with full splendor, shews a glory on the object it shines upon, but doth not increase its own; Christ is *the brightness, the effulgence, or beaming forth of the divine glory*^d. * all this Christ is, and more than either the tongue

^a Psal. cxlii. 4. ^b 2 Chron. vi. 18. ^c Neh. ix. 5. ^d Heb. i. 3.

* It was a beautiful motto once inscribed on a sundial,

Lux Umbra Dei

Which thought seems most agreeably improved by Theodosia.

I.

Eternal power, Almighty God,
Who can approach thy throne?
Accessless light is thy abode,
To angel-eyes unknown

Before

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tongue or pen of men, or angel, can describe.

WHILE we thus meditate on the divine being, as regarding his creatures, we must think of his condescension : if the Lord accounteth it a *humbling himself to behold things done in heaven* ; well may we say, *Lord what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him* ?—*that thou shouldest magnify him, that thou visitest him every morning, and triest him every moment* ? and thus holy men have of old taught us to think of God in our devotional hours. *Behold the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance : all nations, before him are as nothing, and are counted to him less than nothing and vanity* ^b.

BUT when we read of Christ, who though he was in the form of God, yet humbled himself, &c. this will lead on our meditations through a whole train of miseries and distresses, beyond all compare, amazing, and dreadful.

WHAT was the mind that was in Christ ? what was his inducement to this strange degree

II.

Before the radiance of thine eye
The heavens no longer shine,
And all the glories of the sky
Are but a shade of thine.

Vol. I. p. 65, 66.

^a Psal. viii. 3, 4. Psal. cxliv. 3, 4. Job vii. 17,
18. ^b Isa. xl. 15, 17.

gree of humiliation? his inducement, his motive was, towards sinners, all love and mercy: and considering the guilt, the pollution, and the misery which the fall of Adam had brought human nature into; there is hardly to be thought on a more lively emblem of misery and distress on the one hand, or of pure love and generous compassion on the other, than that of the forlorn foundling: *When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live: yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live: Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love:—yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine^a.*

“*GREATER* love, saith Christ, hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friends,” but who among men hath a soul great enough to redeem his friend’s forfeited reputation with the loss of his own? Christ made himself of no reputation; when we were without strength, when we were sinners, when we were enemies to God, when we were in the most dangerous circumstances, and when we had the worst of characters, Christ died for us^b.

THE condescension of Christ in taking our nature upon him, was, in every circumstance of the time, the manner, the place, and every individual article of the whole marvelously singular, and extraordinary; and every

^a Ezek. xvi. 6—8.

^b Rom. v. 6, 8.

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every step, from the manger to the sepulchre seems to descend lower and lower; and from the day of his birth to his nailing to the cross, poverty, distress, shame, and disgrace still attended him; in so full a sense was it made true of him, "that he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs;" all manner of distress from every hand, like black clouds gathering from every quarter of the sky, at last met to pour upon him in one dreadful storm.

WHEN we read that *he made himself of no reputation*; the words seem to have in them the power of a strong figure, wherein much more is intended than is in words expressed: by his making himself of no reputation, is intended that he suffered himself, for a time, and for our sakes, to pass under a voluntary disgrace, or disreputation, which according to the common rule of estimation, is worse than none; to be poor, and to be despised, merely upon that account, is a painful and distressing thought to innocent nature; inasmuch as it is commonly greatly improved by the proud, the ambitious, the envious and malicious, to obstruct one's usefulness. Such is thought to be the import of the prophecy, *he shall be called a Nazarene*,^a and so much is implied in the prophet's prediction, *there is no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men—we*

^a Isaiah liii. 2. 3. ^b Mat. 2. 23.

* See Dr. Edwards on this text, compared with Acts xxiv. 5.

hid, as it were, our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not : through the ignorance of many, and the malice of others, Christ was continually vilified and insulted ; and every circumstance of his life that could be thought upon, was improved as much as they could to his disadvantage : one time he is traduced as low-bred and illiterate, the son of Joseph and Mary ; is not this the carpenter's son ?^a how knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?^b at other times he is accused with bad morals, he is, say they, a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners ;^c nor did his implacable enemies shun to vent, without shame or remorse, the most absurd blasphemies against him ; he casteth out devils by Belzebub the prince of devils ;^d and while the more knowingly malicious propagated these reproachful calumnies, many of the ignorant thought no other of him than that he was a deceiver.

HE took upon him the form of a servant ; and this was also in the appearance of men, one of the very lowest form. Christ (notwithstanding his gracious design) was one whom wicked, ungrateful men despised, and the nation of the Jews abhorred,^e although it was his own nation. He came to his own, and his own received him not ;^f a servant Christ was, but whose servant was he ? he was God's servant, and only the servant of men, or even of rulers for God's sake,

^a Luke iv. 22. ^b John vii. 14. ^c Mark vi. 3. ^d Mat. xi. 19. ^e Mat. xii. 24. ^f Isa. xlix. 7. ^g John i. 11.

and to work out their salvation. As in the former clause, when Christ is said to be in the form of God, it intends that as to his divine nature, he was truly and properly God; so here, for Christ to take upon him the form of a servant, means for him to be for the time a true and proper servant; and to be so to all the intents and purposes of his Lord and master who had engaged him; *behold, saith the Lord, my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.* &c. when this expression, *he took upon him the form of a servant*, is opened; it will cast light upon every part of our present subject, and like a clue will serve to unravel and investigate the whole.

THAT Christ did take upon him the form of a servant, is expressed in the words, "lo! I come to do thy will, O God;" and his perfect freedom and voluntariness therein, is testified in this, "I delight to do thy will, yea, thy law is within my heart:" and on what severe terms and conditions, is partly explained in prophecy, and yet more fully in the four evangelists; in prophecy thus, *listen O isles unto me, and hearken unto me from afar. From the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name, — and said unto me, thou art my servant: I will give thee for a light unto the gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth; the Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak to him that is weary; the Lord hath opened*

mine

mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back; I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting^a; such instances as these, and many more, which may be collected from the prophecies of the old testament, and compared with the history of the new, may much assist us in our meditations, how much Christ became the servant of God, for the sinner's sake, and to answer the end of his salvation.*

BUT the humiliation of Christ did not stop here, in his being *despised and rejected of men*; but, as the servant of God, *he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

DEATH, in the most plain and simple idea we can form of it, hath an aspect awful and disagreeable to nature; but the circumstances which may, and sometimes do attend it, make even the most distant thoughts of it horribly tremendous, and still in proportion more so, as it makes a near approach. Hence it is reported of Count Patkul, a man naturally of a bold, enterprising spirit, being condemned to be broke alive upon the wheel, the sight of the dreadful apparatus provided for his execution, threw him into convulsive agonies. But more than this, all that the rage of man,
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* Psal. xl. 6. mine ear hast thou bored, as some translate, alluding to Exod. xxi. 6. Deut. xvi. 16. 17. see Ainsworth's notes on Psal. xl. 6.

^a Isa. xlix. 1, 3.--6. Isa. l. 4. 5. 6.

and malice of the powers of darkness let loose, Christ could foresee with a soul unmoved; * and what is yet more, with a soul inspired with an ardent and triumphant love, could say, *I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished* : "with desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer^b : " but it was the deep apprehension he had of the wrath of God, as incensed against sin, that made his sufferings so bitter, and his last agonies so exceeding dreadful.

As to the death of the cross, it was ever accounted by all nations, where it was formerly practiced, one of the most miserable, shameful, and dismal punishments that the mind of man could invent, or a human body endure; and for this reason Julius Cæsar, from mere compassion, commanded the pirates he had taken, to be first strangled, and then nailed to the cross : * But if this punishment be so inexpressibly dreadful to the human imagination; of the sufferings of the human soul of the blessed redeemer, what shall I say? my soul shudders at the thought of attempting to write upon them; yet since it is often found that small things may, in description, assist the meditating powers; and also, that contrasts are,

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* The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. John xiv. 30.

* Luke xii. 50.

* Luke xiii. 15. I have heartily desired. Margin.

* Sueton. vit. Jul. Cæs. c. 74.

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in such cases, found serviceable; I would here suggest a few things.

THE evangelists have heedfully recorded one joyful hour in the sorrowful life of the incarnate saviour; and that was when tidings were brought him of the happy introduction of his own gospel, and the way it had made in the world, by the ministry of the seventy; *in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee O Lord, father of heaven and earth, that thou hast bid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so, father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*^a. On the other hand, when an all-gracious saviour is reflecting on the near approach of his death, as typified by the bleeding lamb, now set apart for the passover so near at hand, and which he well knew would be his last supper: viewing the infinite importance of his death, on the one hand, in order to give a spread to the gospel, and the intervening terror of it on the other, which he knew must inviolably attend it, he is struck with a deep pang of sorrow; *verily, verily I say unto you, that except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit; and now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? father save me from this hour; but for this cause came I to this hour; father glorify thy name*^b.

BUT this was but like the little cloud arising out of the sea in Elijah's history, to that black

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and

^a Mat. xi. 25. 26. ^b John xii. 24—27. 28.

and dark cloud which soon after darkened the whole horizon^a: let us then in thought, follow our saviour out from Bethany to Gethsemane, a short distance either of time or place; and we shall find his sorrows working up into a perfect storm; as Christ had before expressed his inward deep sorrow of soul, he now repeats the same with an emphasis inconceivable; *my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death^b**.

In the account given of our Lord's prayer, and his agony in the garden, as collected from the evangelists, are the following circumstances very remarkable.

THERE was, on our Lord's entering into the garden, no enemy in sight, and three of his favourite friends to attend him; and yet his trouble of mind grew so fast upon him, and pressed him so heavy, that he seemed as on the point of fainting under it.

IN this extremity, while a whole torrent of distress was ready to pour in upon him, he withdraws to a small convenient distance from his disciples, and casts himself upon the ground, and with strong cries and tears^c invokes his heavenly father, where all his help lay.

As to the prayer itself, the abruptness,* the vehemency, the repetition of the same words, all these serve to shew us that at the present crisis, there must be felt in the soul of Christ

^a 1 Kings xviii. 44. 45. ^b Mat. xxvii. 38.

^c My soul is surrounded on every side with distressing sorrow. Beza.

^c Heb. v. 7.

* Deep-felt distress (say philosophers) is never wordy.

a distress, though foreboded, never felt before; notwithstanding his being always, through life, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief; and for this I give the following reasons.

○ In consideration that the human nature of Christ, from its first formation to the present instant, was perfectly holy, harmless, and innocent; he had constantly hitherto enjoyed the nearest access to God his heavenly father, and had frequently immediate answers accordingly; as at his baptism^a, at his transfiguration^b, and afterwards at the rising of Lazarus^c.

It was but a few days since, on his short prayer, *father glorify thy name*, there came an answer from heaven immediately, I have glorified it, and will glorify it again; but now on his most earnest request, *father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, he received no answer; this he repeats the second time, with an increase of distress, being in an agony he prayed still more earnestly; again he lifts up his cries the third time^d to that *God who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*^e; yet still the same silence is in heaven, until his sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground; unceasing, unutterable anguish!

ALL that intervenes here is, that (according to St. Luke) *there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him*^f.

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If

^a Luke iii. 22. ^b Luke ix. 29. ^c John xi. 42.
also see John xii. 23. Father I know that thou hearest me always. ^d Mat. xxvi. 39—44. ^e Lam. iii. 33.

^f Luke xxii. 41.

If an angel, armed with a divine commission, could, in the land of Egypt, sweep off all their first-born in one night; or, in the camp of Senacherib an hundred and fourscore and five thousand; what may we not suppose an angel able to do, in the way of friendly, compassionate assistance? but whatever our strongest imagination may conceive in any other case, all we find here, is that his commission went no farther than *to strengthen him*, not to deliver him; for had this been a proper time, and had need so required, instead of one, he could have obtained many legions of angels. This administration of the angel during our Lord's bloody sweat, seems somewhat like that of a friend attending at the bed-side of one in very great distress, with a cordial in his hand; not with expectation of recovering health, or prolonging life, but to sustain the spirits awhile, that the patient may not faint away utterly.

If in the inflicting temporal judgments on a stupid and hardened generation of men, it may be said with so much justice, *can thine heart endure, or thine hands be strong when I shall deal with thee?* what can we conceive of such a lamentation as this, *I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels, my strength is dried up like a potsherd, my tongue cleaveth unto my jaws, and thou hast brought me to the dust of death, and above and beyond all, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Thus

^a Ezek. xxii. 14,

^b Psalm xxii.

THUS wounded, thus bruised, thus broken on the wheel of divine justice, hung the blessed son of God for many hours, amidst tortures unutterable both in body and in soul, involved on every hand with a cloud of impenetrable darkness.

HERE, if ever, christians are taught, to lay aside all vain speculative curiosities, and humble their meditations to the doctrine of the cross; so far is it from being a just maxim, that there are no mysteries in the gospel, that the whole scheme of salvation hath mysteries without end. Here the rays of glory, from all the divine perfections, meet as in one common center.

A FINITE mind cannot explain how the eternal son of God should become man; but however this comes to pass, so it was; this the gospel asserts plainly. *The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*^a.

THAT God the Father should so repeatedly, by a voice from heaven, proclaim, *this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased*; and that after this he should withdraw from him; that it should so please the Father of mercies, to wound, to bruise, to put to grief, to put to death his beloved son, nothing but an oracle, altogether divine, can explain. *All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*^b. *Christ hath re-*

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deemed

^a John i. 14.

^b Isa. liii. 6.

deemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

It embarrasseth the carnal wit, and reason of man to the last degree, to think how God can be so merciful as to forgive a guilty sinner, without setting aside, or at least diminishing the rights of law, or justice; but according to the gospel so it is, God is, through Christ, a just God and a Saviour; just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, whose righteousness imputed, justifieth the ungodly. Infinitely merciful to forgive the greatest sinner, and strictly just to the glory of all his attributes and perfections, at one and the same time.

In the gospel, this salvation is brought nigh to all them that truly fear God, and his glory dwells with them. Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. Truth sprung out of the earth, when Christ rose from the dead, and the heavens poured down righteousness at the day of Pentecost; when besides the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to the divine will, three thousand souls were added to the church in one day^b.

AND all this incomprehensible salvation was designed to issue in the full and everlasting enjoyment of the love of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

IN

^a Gal. iii. 13. ^b Psal. xxxv. 9—13. Isa. xlv. 3, 4. Joel ii. 28, 29. Acts ii. 17—41.

IN the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, John xvii. is contained what is much to the purpose of our present argument; and may serve to conclude this part of our subject.

O RIGHTEOUS Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them^a.

I HAVE declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

WHAT is the name of God the Father, but the manifestation of his glory^b which is given to Christ, to be, by him, carried into execution: *I have, saith he, glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do, ver. 4.* What is the glory of God ultimately considered, but the manifestation of his love in the salvation of the church by Jesus Christ? *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, &c^c.* In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins^c. *I have declared thy name and will declare it, &c. ver. 26.*

THIS

^a John xvii. 25. 26.

^b Chap. iii. 16.

^c 1 John iv. 9, 10.

THIS declaration of the love of God the Father Christ had followed, and promoted hitherto, with the most arduous and indefatigable diligence through the whole course of his ministry here on earth. *I have, saith he, finished the work thou gavest me to do.* He was now entering upon the great work of sacrifice, which was to be followed with that of intercession, above within the vail; and the spread of the everlasting gospel through the whole world. Christ herein declares his immoveable determination to persevere therein. *I have declared thy name, and I will declare it:* and the final result is so fixed as not to be liable to the least uncertainty. *That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.*

WHEREIN is the love of God the Father manifested to Christ so fully and so evidently, as by his raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right-hand; putting all things in subjection to him, and all his enemies, Satan, sin, and death, under his foot-stool?

Is this is the love of God the Father to Christ, as the mediator and redeemer of his elect, what is it then to have this love of God the Father in them?

We are constantly taught, by the word of God, to conceive, that, through the whole œconomy of grace, and salvation, every blessing, that is spiritual, and divine, takes its rise in the eternal purpose of God the Father,
and

and flows down through the merit and mediation of the blessed redeemer, into the souls of the vessels of mercy, in due time, through the manifold operations of the Holy Spirit.

To make the representation, in the present case, as plain as possible; (keeping scripture still in view) if we consider believers separately, and individually, this grace in all its blessings, influences, and operations, is the spiritual living water, which Christ giveth to every one of his redeemed at the time of their effectual calling; and is in them a *well of water springing up into eternal life*^a.

If we consider the whole body of the church, collectively, of which Christ is the head; then the heavenly graces, and divine consolations of the Holy Spirit, as proceeding, both from God the Father and from God the Son, these are a sacred *river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the tabernacles of the most high*^b.

If we raise our contemplations to the upper world, where every degree of weakness, and every shadow of imperfection is done away; then it is a *pure river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the lamb*^c.

FINALLY, as to this part, what is it for Christ to be *in them*? I answer, still the same in substance.

IF
^a John iv. 14. ^b Psal. xlv. 4.
^c Rev. xxii. 1.

If we regard separate and individual believers, we read of *Christ in you the hope of glory*.*

If we read of the church of Christ, *he is the spiritual vital head, and they are complete in him*^b; *who is the head over all things unto the church, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*^c.

If we meditate on the heavenly world, the *Lord God and the lamb are the light and glory of it*^d.

If we meditate on the three persons in the trinity, as concerned in the salvation of the church; thus reads the benediction, *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen*^e.

REFLECTION I.

For whom was all this vast immense treasure of grace and mercy laid out? For sinners, for many of the very chief of sinners. sinners of the chief rank, and first magnitude; for such sinners who had not only lost the image of God, but had even in a great degree effaced humanity itself; sinners sunk into brutality, sinners richly deserving the wrath and curse of God, without measure, without mercy, without mitigation, without end; sinners not worthy of the tremendous privilege

* Col. i. 27. ^b Chap. ii. 10. ^c Ephes. i. 23.
 * Rev. xxi. 23. Chap. xxii. 3—5. ^e 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

privilege of annihilation*. Read their black character, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Such were some of you; but (O the change) ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God, ver. 11. O the immensity, the boundless overflowings of divine love, grace, and mercy! where sin hath abounded, there doth grace much more abound; and where the wages of sin is death, the free gift of God is eternal life, through the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

But remove from our ideas these frightful pictures of enormity, and dress up the man in all the pageantry of his own righteousness; a man without grace, a man without regenerating, and converting grace, what is he then, in the scripture-view of him? He is, for the time, like a body without a soul; a dead carcase wrapped up in rags; a whited wall, a painted sepulchre; a dunghill covered over with snow; and (as condemned by the law of God) a dead man upon legs: for, it is only the grace of God that makes any difference that is durable, and that is so far valuable, as that he may carry it out of the world with him; and that will endure to eternity—*after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved*

* Rev. xiv. 11. The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever.

† Rom. vi. 23.

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ed us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost: which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.— still the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—Not according to their works are they saved and called with an holy calling, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest (more abundantly) by the appearing of Christ who hath abolished death, and hath brought life, and immortality to light, through the gospel.

REFLECTION II.

WHAT an exceeding inveterate evil must sin be in its own nature, which nothing but the sufferings and death of the blessed son of God could remove?

ALL views taken of the evil nature of sin, and of its dreadful consequences, beside what are taken from the sufferings and satisfaction of Christ, are, comparatively, narrow and unequal to it.

TAKE this argument, and meditation, turn it every way you can, and see if it does not prove so; provided still that men are determined to abide by plain scripture, as the only sure rule of judgment, in such a deep, such an infinitely important case.

ON the most glorious and important side, what does the worship, the duty, the adoration

* 2 Tim. i. 9, 10, 11. Tit. iii. 4, 5, 6. Rom. i. 16.

tion of angels amount to, when compared with the strict, and proper rights of deity? Behold God hath set his glory above the heavens, and accounteth it a humbling himself to behold the things done there. He putteth no trust in these his heavenly servants; he hath no necessary trust, or dependance on them, either for his glory or his blessedness. All the duty yielded by these exalted spirits above is nothing more than the discharge of that debt, a debt they for ever owe to him, who is their infinite creator, and most bountiful benefactor, and which, as the total sum, is no discharge at all; but the obligation to duty, love, and praise, is for ever new, and for ever full, and cannot be otherwise; so long as their being, as their endowments, and their enjoyments continue: all this is far below the grandeur of such expressions as these, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, he shall magnify the law and make it honourable. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

On the other hand, the case of the fallen angels may serve to shew of what a dreadful nature sin is, and how impossible it is for them ever to expect mercy; "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into everlasting chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." To be left in horror and despair,

spair, without the least prospect of redemption (for Christ took not on him the nature of angels) is a condition most deplorable; but even in this dreadful and forlorn case they can but endure a part of the wrath and curse of God, but a part of the punishment due to sin; and by consequence they can be but finite instances, or examples of the wrath and displeasure of God against sin.

BUT when an infinitely holy and just God, found all the sins of his people charged upon Christ as their surety, and was determined to take from him full and complete satisfaction, and not spare; the guilt, the desert, the punishment of sin is a weight inconceivable: and what infinite emphasis must this give to the words, *He spared not his own son!*

REFLECTION III.

FROM hence we may be able, by a scripture-rule, to form our judgment of what a true belief of the gospel is, and what are the proper effects of it.

EVEN in the time of the apostles themselves, let the gospel be then preached with all imaginable external evidence of truth; the doctrine of Christ crucified was to the carnal jews a stumbling block, and to the Greek philosophers foolishness; but unto them who truly believed in Christ, he was to them both the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

AND though miracles and inspirations are, long since ceased; yet so far the effects of a preached

preached gospel, still continue the same; the doctrine of the cross is, to carnal minded men as much a stumbling-block as it ever was; while to minds enlightened, and renewed by grace, there is, in the doctrine of Christ crucified felt, a power truly divine.

AND the apprehension of this glorious grace of Christ is proved by the effects of it; *They shall look upon whom they have pierced, and mourn, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born^a.*

As there was a large sample of this kind given at Jerusalem, at the time of Pentecost, on Peter's preaching to the auditory, then present, the doctrine of salvation by a Saviour lately crucified among them, and soon after raised from the dead and taken to heaven^b; so the same effect attends the gospel still, whenever it comes home to the heart and conscience with its living power: and indeed whatever profession may be made of being edified, enlightened, or comforted by the word of the gospel; if there does not attend it a heart-felt sense of the evil of sin, and a sincere inward conscious self-loathing on the account of it, the profession of faith in Christ is vain and void, as being destitute of all solid internal evidence.

AND beside the places above-mentioned, we have many other places of scripture full to the same purpose. *That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy*

X *mouth*

^a Zech. xii. 10.

^b Acts ii. 36——38.

mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God*. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.—Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations^b.

THIS doctrine of evangelical repentance, justly called by St. Paul*, a sorrowing after a godly manner, (or according to God) is capable of a rational defence against libertines of all kinds, both in principle and practice. What, among beings truly rational, can be more just, than to suppose, that if any one sincerely believes that Christ died to procure the pardon of his sins, he must feel an inward grief at his very heart for his sins, as being the meritorious cause of his Saviour's sufferings? How can he do less than inwardly dread indulging so infinite an evil? and how can he forbear wishing, longing and praying, that

* Ezek. xvi. 63.

^b Chap. xxxvi. 25—31.

* 2 Cor. vii. 9. margin.

that God would by his grace *take away all iniquity from him*^a?

AND when he is strongly enticed and solicited to sin, even that which is most natural, and most delightful to flesh, and sense; does he not dread giving way to it, even in his meditations, lest by that means it should grow upon him, till by its stupifying and intoxicating influence it should, at length entirely possess him? On the other hand, while he contemplates the gloriously unspotted life of the ever blessed Jesus; can he do less than long to be, both in heart, and life like him? can he, sincerely love his Saviour, and not wish and endeavour to imitate him, and from his very inmost soul, to be as like him, both in his temper, and in his life as possible?

To conclude this part of the present argument; whoever he be that denies these to be the true and genuine effects of a living faith, no matter what his arguments, or what his pretensions are, whether in defence of christian liberty on the one hand, or to avoid the danger, and guard against the consequences of trusting to one's own righteousness, if these fruits of the spirit are totally wanting in him, or he totally unconcerned about them; and yet, hath the assurance to call himself a christian, *he is a liar, and the truth is not in him*^b.

X 2

RE-

^a Hof. xiv. 2.^b 1 John ii. 4.

REFLECTION IV.

Love to Christ, in its power, is of an exceeding drawing and attractive nature; it not only draws the christian off from the world, and from every loose indulgence; this, as much as it seems to be, is but half the christian, so much the word imports, Heb. xii. 2. *looking unto Jesus*. As the mark attracts the eye of the archer, or as the prize attracts the eye, and the whole attention of the racer, so doth the love of Christ in its power.

We have another word full to the same purpose, 2 Cor. v. 14. *the love of Christ constraineth us*.

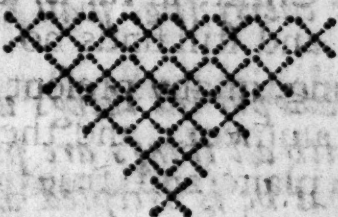
THE love of Christ, so far as it operates, still tends forward, and still finds no settled rest in any present thing, in any present frame, or in any present attainment: and the same apostle gives this as a plain and true reason for it; "knowing that while we are present, or at home in the body we are absent from the Lord," or at a distance from him, and being still at a distance from him; manifold impediments will be still throwing themselves in the way; which still do the christian inexpressible hurt as to his spiritual peace, rest and comfort.

WHILE we live in a region so remote from the sun of righteousness, and while our souls are so weak and sickly, it is not altogether to be wondered at, that they should feel so many painful, so many hurtful impressions: for

(as

(as one faith) " though the love of God the
 " father towards his elect in Christ, be in itself
 " but one pure eternal flame ; yet, till they
 " come to heaven, to be for ever with the
 " Lord, they will never be thoroughly heated
 " with it*."

* This is that love of God the father which Christ
 faith shall be in them. John xvii. 26.



X 3.

I COR.

20. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and is become the first fruits of them that slept.

21. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead.

22. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23. But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming.

24. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.

25. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

27. For he hath put all things under his feet; but when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him.

28. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

N. B. I have placed this paragraph thus in the center page, for the reader's conveniency, that he may have the whole at hand to consult at his own leisure; and according as there will be occasion to refer to various parts of it in the following pages.

S E R M O N IX.

The Glory of Christ in his Triumph
over Satan, Sin and Death.

I COR. XV. 25. 26.

*For he must reign till he hath put all enemies
under his feet.*

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

TH E apostle Paul's introduction to his first epistle to the Corinthians, contains the following remarkable passages.

“ I thank my God always on your behalf, for
“ the grace of God which is given you by Jesus
“ Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by
“ him, in all utterance and in all knowledge,
“ even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed
“ in you ; so that ye came behind in no gift,
“ waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus
“ Christ, who shall confirm you unto the end,
“ that ye may be blameless unto the coming of
“ our Lord Jesus Christ.” Chap. i 4. 5. 6.

How this once famous flourishing church should be so soon corrupted, in so many articles, and so far, as, among the rest, to deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, is, on several considerations very strange and mysterious; but by what means, or by whomsoever this was done, so it was; and the apostle sets himself in this chapter, purposely to remove their unanswerable prejudice against it, and to confirm and establish their faith in the belief of it; and upon the whole it is evident he treats the subject as being a point of the very highest importance.

AND in this case it was with the Corinthians as it is most commonly found in like cases, as to errors in religion; though they were attended with such absurd or dangerous consequences, yet, for the present, their way of thinking seemed to them both just and rational, or however not near so irrational as it really was; and therefore the more fully to convince them, he began his argument in this chapter, where his ministry began amongst them. *I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day according to the scripture; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of which the greater part were then living to testify the truth of the fact; and last of all, saith he, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

The

^a From v. 3. to v. 19 inclusive.

THE apostle's manner of reasoning is after this sort; "if there be no such thing as a resurrection of the dead, as some affirm; then is not Christ risen from the dead, and by consequence, we, the apostles, who declare to you that Christ is risen from the dead, are false witnesses, for God, in testifying that he raised up Christ from the dead, whom he did not raise up; and by further consequence the whole gospel is a fable; but if Christ be risen from the dead, as he most certainly is; if any credit is to be given to any matter of fact, then is the whole gospel, and the whole bible true, and, be it at their peril, who persist in denying it."

BUT still the apostle was well aware that after all, some there might be of the old Sadducees (*not believing the scriptures, nor considering the power of God^a*) might be apt to query, whether admitting for truth the resurrection of Christ, it would be certainly concluded from thence the general resurrection of the dead at the last day; and that they would here seek their last refuge in cavil and hesitation, thus; *but some men will say, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come^b?*

THIS query the apostle answers by shewing that it is both frivolous and impertinent; *thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die; and besides, saith he, that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or some other grain^c,* That

^a Mat. xxii. 29. ^b 1 Cor. xv. 35. ^c ver. 36. 37.

THAT is, as much as to say; suppose you sow or cast into the ground wheat or barley, or any other sort of grain, be it of what ever kind you will suppose, that body or grain of wheat, barley, &c. is not that body which shall be but bare grain, that is to say, a plain naked grain, without stalk, chaff or ear; so that when the old grain that was sown is diffused or dissipated, or as it were lost in the earth, the God of nature giveth it a new body, as it seemeth good to his power and wisdom to create, which cometh up out of the finer particles of the old; not naked as it was sown, but with a blade, stalk and ear, for the service and use of men.

Now if in these common and obvious productions of the vegetable world, which are so very evident to sense, these yet contain problems which might perplex all the rules of natural philosophy to resolve; how weak must it then be, considering who God is, and what his almighty power both can and will do, to ask how he can raise a glorious heavenly body out of the scattered particles of an earthly one? since death is not the annihilation, but only the analysis of nature*.

THIS part of the argument he also diversifies in the various kinds of animal bodies; "there is one kind of flesh of men, another kind of flesh of beasts, another of fishes, another of birds;" *for saith he all flesh is not the same kind of flesh*.

These

* Phil. i. 23.

^a v. 39, — 41.

THESE all after their kind propagate a constant succession of new bodies out of the old, of the same kind and nature, while in time the old decay, and die, and are lost, as to their own particular and individual form and existence.

AGAIN argues the apostle, there is a difference between bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial, each have their glory, and each glory of these is diversified; "there is one glory of the sun, there is another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory, so also," addeth he, is the resurrection of dead;" by which he seems to teach us, that the resurrection of the dead will produce as great a difference in the bodies of the saints at the resurrection, from what they were when laid in the grave, as there is between a clod of clay, and a star in the firmament.

FROM hence the apostle goes on to prove not only the probability, the possibility, the truth, and certainty of the doctrine of the resurrection, but the necessity of it; and this he proveth from this consideration, that such is the glory of the other world, and such the frailty and weakness of this mortal state, that it is not possible for flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of God, or for corruption to inherit incorruption: and from thence he goes on to describe the manner of the resurrection of the blessed to a glorious and immortal life; and concludes with a triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"the

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength
 “of sin is the law. But thanks be to God,
 “which giveth us the victory, through our
 “Lord Jesus Christ.”

In the paragraph where our text is, are three references following one another.

1st. A REFERENCE is had to Adam, as the natural, and covenant-head of all mankind.—*In Adam all die*, to this agrees Rom. v. 14.—*Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

OVER against this is set Christ, as the covenant-head, and representative of all his people: and these two opposite parts of the verse are joined together by the particles of comparison *As* and *So*.—*As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

2dly. A REFERENCE is had to the type of the offering of the first ripe fruits to God, under the Mosaic-law; which was an earnest, or a kind of dedication of the whole harvest to God^b. To this answers ver. 23.—*every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming*, q. d. “As there must be some proportion distance of time between the ingathering of the first-fruits and the full harvest; so there must be a proper distance of time between the resurrection of Christ, and that of his people.”

3dly.

^a From ver. 42 to 57 inclusive.

^b Exod xxii. 29.

2dly. In the text, in hand, there is a reference had to that eminent type of Christ Melchizedeck, who was both king and priest, Psal. cx. referred to in the margin, and largely commented upon in the epistle to the Hebrews.

THERE are two things in the cxth Psalm which the apostle makes use of, with very great advantage, with regard to the perfection of Christ's priesthood.

1st. As to the perfection of Christ's sacrifice, instead of his being a standing, he is a sitting priest; a posture never allowed to any priest before. "To which of the angels said he, at any time, sit thou on my right-hand till I make thine enemies thy foot-stool."

AND that this dignity is ascribed to the perfection of his sacrifice, is evident from Heb. x. 11, 12, 13, 14.

EVERY priest standeth daily ministring and offering, often times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin. But, as the highest evidence of God the Father's full acceptance of his sacrifice, this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right-hand of the throne of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his foot-stool. For he hath by one offering perfected, for ever, them that are sanctified.

2dly. WHAT serves to make the type complete, is, That Christ, our great high-priest, is a reigning priest, as Melchizedeck was, at the

the same time, both *king of Salem*, and *priest of the most high God*.

As we have before noted on the doctrine of Christ's intercession, that it is established upon his sacrifice, wherein every article is fully and for ever adjusted, on God the Father's part between him and his people, as to the claims both of law and justice; this makes a clear and open way for the execution of our redeemer's kingly office, implied in the words, *Then cometh the end*; denoting the necessity of the thing, with some general account what is meant by the end, viz. *the putting down all rule and all authority and power, and finally, the son's delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father*: But in the intermediate time Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, the last of which enemies is death.

THE things to be considered are,

1st. CHRIST's kingly office, expressed in this,

HE must reign.

2dly. THE final end of this great and important administration, viz.

TILL all enemies (and death among the rest) is put under his feet.

1st. IN the text we have Christ's kingly office,

HE must reign, &c.

IN this part is to be considered, in a brief and summary way, the rise, the nature, the extent, the special end and design, and the final

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final end and issue of the whole administration of Christ's mediatorial kingdom.

THIS mediatorial kingdom of Christ, takes its rise in the decree, which Christ, in prophecy saith, he had from God the Father, Psalm ii. *The Lord hath said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give unto thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

THIS prophecy of David is adapted and applied in Acts iv. 24—28. in the joint prayer of the whole church. They lift up their voice with one accord to God, and said, Lord thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate with the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand, and thy counsel determined before to be done.

THE conclusions from hence are these,
1st. If God did, from all eternity, decree to manifest his glory, some one, or more reasonable beings, must in time be made, to whom this glory of deity is to be made known;
and

and that knowing and reflecting upon the glory of the divine goodness manifested to them in their creation, in their endowments and in their enjoyments, they might be excited thereby to give him all the glory and praise, *who is over all God blessed for ever* *.

2dly. If the wisdom of God saw fit that there should be a subordination of beings dependent one upon another, and that over these should be some capable of moral government, and that the final result of all should be the exaltation of the mercy of God in the salvation of a number of sinners; if all this is allowed, then it was highly requisite that one person should be fixed upon, who should be at the head of these affairs, every way able and faithful, to carry this important scheme into execution: and as it was necessary, so a person every way suitable is found accordingly. This is the revelation: *I have said mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shall thou establish in the very heavens.—Thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people, I have found David my servant, with my holy oil have I anointed him.—I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him, &c. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the mighty*

* Psal. lxxxix.

* The angel of the great council, Sept.

mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom; to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth even for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this^a. Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory; and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both^b.

To this may be added Daniel's vision: I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the ancient of days did sit; whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him, thousand thousands ministred unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the son of man, came in the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people and nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting

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^a Isa. ix. 6, 7. ^b Zech. vi. 12, 13.

ing dominion, that shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

THE Lord Jesus, just upon the point of his ascension, from Mount Olives to his throne in heaven, backs his commission to his apostles with this sanction; *All power in heaven, and in earth is given unto me.—Lo, I am with you, alway even unto the end of the world. Amen^a.*

FROM hence our meditations, as directed by a scripture-light, divide into three branches, commonly known by the name of God's works of creation, providence, and grace.

THESE three fill up the whole volume of divine decrees; which are delivered into the hand of Christ, like one vast volume or scroll fast bound up together, and sealed on the out-side with seven seals, which, Christ, according to commission openeth one by one; after the opening of these, which, upon the whole include all the revolutions of time, years, and ages; which by parts and degrees become legible, so far as divine wisdom sees fit for created minds to read; at the final conclusion of which Christ will deliver up his mediatorial-commission to God, *even the Father, that God may be all in all, ver. 24—28.*

As to the three branches before-mentioned, we may briefly note,

THAT

* Dan. vii. 9, 10—13, 14. See the dream, Dan. ii. of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and the interpretation of it.

^a Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

THAT the works of creation go through the hand of Christ. *In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

THE work of conservation* is ascribed to Christ; *He is before all things; and by him all things consist.* He upholdeth all things by the word of his power^c.

As to his government, and superintendency over reasonable beings; *He is king of kings and lord of lords, prince of the kings of the earth. By him kings reign and princes decree justice; by him princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.*

As to the state of the dead; *He that was once dead now liveth, and from henceforth liveth for evermore, and hath in his hand the keys of hell and death*^e, i. e. full power over the invisible world^f.

As to the angelic world; angels, principalities, and powers, thrones, and dominions are subject to him.

As to his providential government of the good angels; he declares that at a word he

Y 2 could

John i. 1, 2, 3.

* Conservation, i. e. a continued creation, or a creation drawn out into a long line, or succession of beings.

Col. i. 17. ^c Heb. i. 3. ^e Prov. viii. 15, 16

^f Rev. i. 18. ^f Ephes. i. 20, 21.

could command the aid of more than twelve legions of angels^a.

As to his providential restraint of the evil angels; it was abundantly manifested, while he was here upon the earth, by his casting out many of them; and as to his spiritual kingdom, *He was made manifest that he might destroy the works of the Devil^b*, and all his power of death, established by the means of sin^c.

As to the kingdom of grace; the glory of it overspreads the whole dispensation of the gospel; and though the carnal world see no more of the glory of it, than one stone-blind sees of the glory of the noon-day-sun; yet, such as truly believe in him, behold so much of the glory, as to give them strength, peace, and comfort.

THIS expression, *He must reign*, denotes not only the necessity of the thing, as arising from the divine decree; but also the final end and design of it, viz. that all things may be subdued unto him: and here also are supposed the conjunction of power, wisdom, and goodness.

GOVERNMENT without power to put the laws into execution is but an empty name, a title without the thing; power without goodness in government is but pompous tyranny; and even both these, without wisdom and penetration sufficient to guide the reins of government,

^a Matt. xxvi. 53. ^b 1 John iii. 8. ^c Heb. ii. 14.
1 Cor. i. 24.

vernment would render the whole administration weak and precarious.

BUT however deficient any earthly establishment may be in any, or in all these important particulars; these three meeting in Christ, who is made to appear to all who believe in him, *to be both the power of God, and the wisdom of God*; these three form in the mind a conception of a government altogether divine.

By his wisdom he can judge of all futurities with infinite and most infallible certainty; so that no future event can start up unforeseen by him, to disconcert his measures; and for whatever can fall out, his power and his goodness will provide means accordingly; making good, in the highest sense, the state-maxim, *the good of the subject is the supreme law*.

Summary CONCLUSION.

If we consider the divine will, as giving rise to the actual existence of all beings*; if we consider the glory of God, in the salvation of the church by Jesus Christ, as the highest end of all the decrees of God; and if we consider the works of creation and providence, in all their vast circle, and infinite variety, as so many means still subordinate to the same end; and again, if we consider God the father, as giving into Christ's hands the full reins of government, as to one fully able to *subdue all things*

Y 3

* Thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory, and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. Rev. iv. 11.

things to himself, even from the first formation of all things, to his giving up the kingdom to God, even the father, that God may be all in all; if we consider these things in their connection, order, dependance, and harmony, in which they appear to be placed in the sacred scripture; we may in some agreeable measure, be assisted to follow our subject as by one straight, undivided line, till our thoughts arrive where change and alteration are no more.

THE apostle, Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8. noteth on Psa. vii. 4, 5, &c. *thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet; for in that he put all things in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under: but now we see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man; for it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

“ We who live under the gospel-dispen-
 “ tion, behold Jesus, who in the days of hu-
 “ miliation while here on earth, was made
 “ in appearance lower than the angels of light;
 “ upon the account of his suffering death, (as
 “ a sacrifice for sin) now crowned in heaven
 “ with glory and honour; of which his re-
 “ surrection from the dead on the third
 “ day, his ascension into heaven, his ses-
 “ sion at the right hand of God; and more-
 “ over

“over, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and
 “the spread of the gospel in the world, in all
 “these Christ hath a pledge, an earnest, a part
 “of that glory, which he is to enjoy in eternal
 “fruition, when all things shall be fully sub-
 “dued unto him.”

*BUT we see, saith Paul, not yet all things put
 under him; “some part of this glorious work
 “is already done, he hath ascended up on high,
 “he hath led captivity captive, he hath spoiled
 “principalities and powers; part is now coming
 “in the world, in the in-gathering of the elect
 “that are scattered abroad, and full assurance is
 “given by the word and oath of God for the
 “whole: once have I sworn by my holiness, that
 “I will not lie unto David, his seed shall endure
 “for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.”*

THIS decree, which compriseth and includes
 the whole design of special and efficacious
 grace, shall have in the issue its full and infal-
 lible accomplishments; as the love, the power,
 the justice, the grace, the mercy, the truth, the
 faithfulness, and every attribute of deity are
 engaged in the salvation of the church, nothing
 shall withstand it, *the gates of hell shall not pre-
 vail against it*^b: envy it, oppose it, malign it,
 persecute it, blaspheme it, they may, and
 certainly will; but neither men, nor devils can
 defeat his purpose, who allows them, for a sea-
 son, and to bring about the end of his own
 glory, that little strength they have*.

Y 4

How

^a Psa. lxxxix. 35, 36. ^b Mat. xvi. 18.

* Charnock on divine providence.

HOWEVER things may seem at present, or whatever aspect they may wear, either in the church, or in the world; whatever may be done, or whatever may be designed to be done, either by the fiery bigot, the artful sophist, or the licentious blasphemer of the gospel, all will at last end in this, *surely the wrath of men shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*.^a

THAT which establisheth the kingdom of Satan in the world, is sin; which had its first foundation laid in the fall of Adam, and in the total corruption, and depravity of human nature; and the whole power and policy of those apostate spirits, who *kept not their first estate, and left their habitation*.^b, hath been employed ever since to build up and promote this infernal empire; hence hath the devil obtained those many significant names given to him in scripture, as Satan, an adversary, the devil, probably because he is a defamer, a detractor, a blasphemer, a liar, one who denies the truth of God in his word and in his works, Apollyon, a destroyer, &c. all importing it to be his whole endeavour to dishonour God, and destroy the souls of men.

THIS infernal establishment, under the conduct of one more principal, as our Lord's words are, *Beelzebub the prince of the Devils*,^c, is called by many other names; signifying that they all are under their leader, as though they were but one, there being among them the very

^a Psa. lxxvi. 10.

^b Jude 6.

^c Mat. xii. 24.

very strictest uniformity of temper, conduct, and design, the most inexpressible uniformity in their combination in wickedness; and these are represented as having great power and influence over mankind; who, as before said, are by the means of sin, fallen under their infernal government.

SATAN is called *the prince of the power of the air*^a; not that he hath power at will over the elements, as some weakly or superstitiously imagine^{*}; but rather because the airy region may be supposed to be the more common residence, or place of rendezvous of these most inveterate enemies both of God and man.

SATAN is called the prince of this world, and the prince of darkness, and his government over the minds of men is called the kingdom of darkness, or the power of darkness, as he is the ruler of the darkness of this world; inasmuch as Satan's temptations cast a thick, infatuating mist before the eyes of men, and then by new supplies of frauds, lies and falsehoods, he still thickens the darkness, and pusheth on his grand design of dishonouring God, and destroying the souls of men.

HENCE is Satan said to be a liar, and a murderer from the beginning; inasmuch as from his first tempting Eve with the forbidden fruit, ever since, his kingdom hath been still supported by the means of temptation.

WHAT

^a Ephes. ii. 2.

^{*} What Satan may do by extraordinary commissions, as in Job's case, is nothing towards the above vulgar opinion.

WHAT endless volumes would it fill to write the history of Satan's kingdom in its rise and progress? and yet all seems reducible to a few general heads.

SATAN having insinuated the nature of sin into our first parents, the present principle soon began to operate so as to leaven the whole frame, the whole entire constitution of man; its subtil venom pervades every power and passion both of body and soul; and from hence appears the surprizing power of temptation when it falls in with the more naturally vicious inclination.

WHEN God said before the flood, *every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man is only evil continually*; and after the flood, (still the same) *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*^b; we are taught by it that the principle of evil in mankind is all of one general kind and nature, or one evil infinitely diversified; still in all its forms contrary to the holy nature and will of God, through the powerful workings of Satan in mankind, as the *natural sons of disobedience*^c.

NOR is there any need to raise a dust in our way, by disputing whether Satan be at the beginning, or at the end of every temptation of mankind; it is manifest that when St. James saith, *every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed*, &c. the apostle had two things in view; first, to vindicate the almighty God from the blasphemous imputation

^a Gen. vi. 3. ^b Gen. viii. 21. ^c Eph. ii. 2

tion of his being the author of sin; this he defends against the libertines: *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* On the contrary, secondly, his design is to fix the guilt of sin on man himself. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed, i. e.* "By suffering himself to be carried away with the impetuosity of his own sinful inclinations; by first indulging it in his own mind and fancy, there brooding and fostering it, from whence it ripens into act, and by this means he adopts the hidden iniquity, and makes it his own: he fixes the guilt upon his own conscience. *Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.*"

ALL that I have more to say on this head, is only this; that it is exceeding guilty and dangerous to attempt to charge God with man's sin; yea supposing that Satan had a hand in every actual sin of mankind, which is a thing impossible ever to be proved, this would do the sinner no service, since after all the judgment of God himself in this matter is definitive and final, as before said, *God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Here then we fix a point, we draw a line, and reassume our former subject.

CHRIST

CHRIST *must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*

It being the definition of Satan's kingdom, that it is an establishment of sin in the world; for, as to original sin, all mankind are but Adam drawn at length; or Adam's sin extended, or drawn out as into one long unmeasurable line, *of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*^a; so the kingdom of Christ is throughout an establishment of pure and unmixed grace^b.

CHRIST told Pilate *his kingdom was not of this world*^c; not as thus corrupted, as thus infected, as thus influenced by the prince of darkness. Christ's kingdom of grace has no connexion with the world, nor any resemblance or likeness to it: A natural and civil connection there must be between men and things during this mortal life; and it cannot be otherwise, considering the present nature of things, and the circumstances of the catholick church's present situation in the world^d: but what I mean is, that those who are truly and indeed born again, or, as St. Peter saith, *are made partakers of the divine nature*^e; these, their spirit, their temper, their aims and views, are vastly wide from those of the common world: and it is great pity that so many who take upon them the christian name and character, should give into a studied conformity to the fashionable vanities,

^a 1 John ii. 16.

^b Zech. iv. 6, 7.

^c John

xviii. 36.

^d 1 Cor. v. 10.

^e 2 Pet. i. 4.

ties and follies of the age and time they live in; especially since the example of Christ, the practice of the apostles, and of the first and purest ages of christianity, and even the whole current of exhortations, under the gospel-dispensation, were so strong against it. *Be ye not conformed unto this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God^a.*

In the great work of redemption, Christ having so loved his church as to wash it from sin in his own blood^b, he gave himself for it also, that he might cleanse it by the washing of water by the word. That he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. And that it should be holy, and without blemish^c.

CHRIST, by his sufferings and death hath set his people free from curse and condemnation; and by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on them abundantly^d, he fits them for holy communion with the ever blessed God in the present life; and by perfecting what his own grace first begun, they are at last made perfectly meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

THIS is what I would still be understood to mean, by the kingdom of Christ not being of this world, and that those who are the proper

^a Rom. xii. 1, 2.
25, 26, 27.

^b Rev. i. 5.
^d Tit. iii. 5, 6.

^c Ephes. v.

per subjects of it, have no connection with it: for in the present case, whether we consider Satan, as the prince, or God of this world; or whether we consider graceless men, who live without God in the world, it will, in the present argument, come all to one and the same end: and so far as sin affects, governs, and rules mankind, it means the same thing, 1 John v. 19. *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

As in a human establishment, a king and his subjects are still considered as one political body, of which he is the head, and they the members under different classes or arrangements; this then will serve to clear the whole subject we have had so long in hand, and will set it in a plain and distinct light.

If sin in all its innumerable forms, shapes, and modifications, with all its ruinous consequences, is Satan's kingdom, by which he rules and governs to the outside of his power, to the dishonour of God, and to the destruction of the souls of men; so Christ's kingdom is an establishment of pure grace; all such who are the subjects of this kingdom, are such whom the word of God directs, and his

• Or the whole world lieth in the wicked one, as some note; or buried and sepulchred in sin and wickedness, as others read; or, as it were, devoured, and imbowelled by the cruelty and oppression of the devil, *that roaring lion*, as 1 Pet. v. 8.

So widely different from this is Christ's kingdom: we know that we are of God, 1 John v. 14. See Beza's notes on the place.

his Holy Spirit makes gracious; and having begun this good work in them, he will perform it until his second coming, without sin, unto their complete salvation.

AGAIN, whether we consider the present state, the situation or the circumstances of distinct or individual believers; or if we consider any separate christian society, or church of Christ; or whether we consider the whole mystical body, or catholic church of Christ; or whether, on the other hand, we consider any single sinner, as an individual, who thinks he has it in his power, and has boldness enough to distinguish himself in the Devil's service; as many such there have been, and still are in the world, who are the most open and avowed enemies to God, to Christ, to his gospel, to all goodness; or whether, *lastly*, we consider the whole world of the wicked, and Satan at their head, it all comes to one and the same end.

Thus the kingdom of Christ, having its foundation laid in the pure and unmixed grace and love of God the Father; and as the whole administration of this government is given to Christ, as the affairs of it pass through his hands, and as all possible security is given for the success of the whole, what shall or can withstand it? The church of God, in every age since the martyrdom of righteous Abel, has, in one way or other, rode out many a dreadful storm; and never since the world began did the church of Christ ever find an enemy

enemy more politic, more powerful, more fierce, more cruel, or more dreadful than Anti-christ; but being, by an irrevocable decree, long ago devoted to certain and unavoidable destruction, that accursed hierarchy has, ever since the Reformation, been mouldering away gradually, and by slow degrees; and in despite of all the secret plots, the cruel assassinations, the inquisitions, massacres, or other publick butcheries, he is still tumbling down to destruction.

SUCH is the contention between sin and grace, and so much the word imports; *The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would^a.*

If we consider the particular churches and congregations of professing believers, the thing is in the end much the same; these have their risings and declensions, some members of churches, some sooner, some later, are fitted for, and taken to heaven: *Your fathers, where are they? and your prophets do they live for ever^b*: Young men rise in their room, to people other churches; some are gifted and called to preach the gospel, to convert sinners, to plant and gather new churches, oftentimes vastly remote from the place of their nativity, or the place of their first effectual calling, so that while the publick and more apparent interest of religion seems to sink and decay in one

^a Gal. v. 17.

^b Zech. i. 5.

one place, it rises and flourishes in another: and in those very places where the gospel still continues, some grow dull and dead and formal, heretical, erroneous and licentious, which makes fearful heart-aching-work for the faithful few that remain; and yet amongst all these changes and alterations, the Lord's assurance holds good in the main; "Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall to the earth. In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and will close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."

If we follow this subject to the case of particular believers; these have their ebbings and their flowings, their falls and their risings, their backslidings and their recoveries, their clouds and their sunshine, their trials and temptations, their manifestations and desertions, their assaults and their assistances, their afflictions and their succours; and thus receiving grace they faint not; for these afflictions which in comparison are but light, and in duration momentary, these work out for them, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory^b.

TILL he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Thus, as hath been briefly seen, Christ by his death having obtained pardoning, and sanctifying grace; (called by St. John his

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coming

^a Amos ix. 5—11.

^b 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

coming both with water and with blood^a.) is a sure scheme laid to overturn Satan's kingdom to the very bottom of it, and to raise the everlasting glory of our redeemer upon its ruins.

WHEN it is here said, *all enemies are to be put under him*, the terms are universal and absolute, without reserve; importing that Christ's kingdom shall flourish, and his conquests extend till every obstruction is removed; so that not a cloud, not a shade, or even the shadow of a shade shall remain, that might give the admiring and adoring saints the very least interruption.

THE grand, the capital enemy to God, to Christ, to his people, is sin, sin in its proper nature, sin in the abstract; and when this enemy is destroyed, all other enemies will find their death in it: and all their power, and influence to oppose, hurt, or annoy will be annihilated, and lost for ever.

IN the account which St. Paul gives of Christ's end in dying, it was *that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death; that is the devil^b*. When the devil by his temptations draws men into sin, it is that sword by which he destroys souls. Now Christ by dying appeases the wrath of God, takes away the guilt of sin, disarms Satan, and takes away the sting of death. *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through*

^a 1 John v. 6.

^b Heb. ii. 14, 15.

through our Lord Jesus Christ?. As an implacable enemy being disarmed, is altogether in the power of his conqueror, and is no more to him than a dead man; so sin being destroyed, as having its death's wound in Christ's death, and Satan being by that means conquered, as having his arms taken from him, what has the believer more to fear?

If it be objected that in the next verse we read of those who were, *through fear of death, all their life-time, subject to bondage*; to this I answer,

It must be allowed by all, who rightly understand the nature of the severity of the Mosaic dispensation, and on the other hand, the true nature and use of gospel-liberty, to be a very great blessing not to be in danger of sudden and immediate death from the hand of God for a mistake, or neglect, or violation of every ceremonial injunction; but upon a nearer view taken of the apostle's argument and design, there may be found in it more than that already intimated*.

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ALL

* 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

* It may appear abundantly evident to any one who attends to the apostle's argument in his epistle to the Hebrews, that at the same time that he endeavours to set the glory of gospel-liberty in a clear and strong light, at the same time powerfully exhorting them to prize their privileges; he let them know that careless, abandoned, licentious christians, will meet with a condemnation, and a punishment much more dreadful than that inflicted by the Mosaic law. "He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three

ALL seem to allow the gospel-discoveries of the way of life and salvation, are much brighter and stronger than those under the Old Testament; and among many others this is one which is elucidated exceedingly by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, *viz.* the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the glory of the saints at the last day: this is capable of abundant proof, by comparing the texts of the Old Testament with the New.

It may be thought that the profession of Job, Chap. xix. 25, 26, 27. is equal to any one prophecy under that dispensation: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*

BUT even as to this, it may now be said, Christ is actually risen from the dead, and is become the first fruits of them that slept: he is now actually in heaven, in his own proper human nature; and moreover the angels have testified to the wondering disciples, that *that same Jesus, whom they then saw go up into heaven,*

three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall they be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the son of God, Chap. x. 23—29. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, ver. 31. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh—How shall we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? Our God is a consuming fire,” Chap. xii. 25—29.

heaven, should descend in like manner as they then saw him go up into heaven.

BUT omitting any farther discussions that might carry us wide of the main point, I return to that one which lies directly before us, viz.

THE last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

IN this part is to be considered in what respect death may be called an enemy, and why, to the saints, the last enemy.

THIS term or title, enemy, may be considered either absolutely, and abstractedly, or occasionally, and secondarily.

WE have considered the undertaking of Christ as pointed directly at the utter ruin of sin in his people absolutely, fully, and everlastingly; with all the evil consequences that can possibly follow from it. In this view, sin is ever to be accounted the primary, first, and most absolute enemy to the glory of God, to all his divine attributes and perfections, to the glory of his holiness, justice, goodness and truth: and, at the same time, the eternal enemy to the true happiness of all reasonable beings: and which happiness they can never compleatly enjoy till sin with all that belongs to it are no more.

THE final and everlasting extirpation of sin, we reckon to commence at the time of the believer's dissolution. *To day, said Christ to*

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Acts i. 10, 11.

the penitent thief) shalt thou be with me in paradise^a.

THEN are departed saints, *presented faultless before the presence of the divine glory with exceeding joy^b—Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them^c.*

THIS will assist us in forming our sentiments why death is called an enemy; and why the last of that name and character.

THE scripture saith, that death entered into the world by the means of sin. *In Adam all die^d.* So that death is not a principal enemy to man; or death is not one of the first and chief enemies to the happiness of mankind but a consequent and secondary one. *By one man's disobedience many were made sinners^e.* Man, by the means of sin, became unto God, both a debtor and a traitor; and, as such, hath forfeited to the justice of God, both his life and his felicity, both in body and soul for ever. *Now Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us^f.* Thus the curse due on the account of the guilt of sin being removed, death, with respect to the saints, is henceforth to be apprehended in quite a new light, as being seen by faith; whatever aspect he may seem to appear in to our animal nature.

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^a Luke xxi. i. 42. 43. ^b Jude 24. ^c Rev. xiv. 13.

^d Rom. v. 12. ^e Ver. 18, 19, ^f Gal. iii. 13.

THE apostle's metaphor of a serpent without a sting is happily suited to our instruction: a serpent without a sting wears the same form as formerly; and unless we were well satisfied that its sting were taken away, one would hardly be induced to be familiar with it; but if it were found certainly true that all danger on that account is removed, the horror the human mind was possessed with, would in time sensibly abate; and when the spirits were quite calm and fully recollected, on a deliberate view taken of the imminent impending death, so agreeably and happily delivered from, it might at last issue in a triumph, O serpent, where is thy sting?

To speak still after the manner of human comparison, death has something in its aspect, beyond all expression, awful and tremendous; many a general of an army, has outbraved death, amidst all the smoke and fire, amidst all the thunder and horror of the fight, who could no way face that grim spectre within the curtains of his own bed. But *thanks be to God, who in Christ, giveth his saints the victory.*

It is a saying common among divines, *Death is an enemy to nature, but a real friend to grace*: so faith views it, and can meet it with calmness and composure; *I know, saith St. Paul, whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*.* There-

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fore

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

fore death is not an enemy to the people of God really, but only in appearance; or, if an enemy at all, only to their bodies, but not to their souls; and to their bodies no farther, than by some sharp agonizing pains, introducing them to their everlasting rest. So St. Stephen, though amidst a shower of stones, is said to *fall asleep*.

Much instruction, both as to the absolute necessity and benefit the saints receive from their final dissolution, may be gathered from the type of the fretting leprosy^a; that proved so inveterate that there was no way left to extirpate the infection, but by pulling down the whole fabrick, stick and stone, and carrying it all away to mix with the common rubbish.

So deep is the taint of original sin in us, and so cast and mingled with our very constitution, with our very frame and make, and so, to the last degree, obstinate; that divine wisdom and goodness have thought fit to make our dissolution the last, the final, and effectual remedy; and this has occasioned many a gracious soul, even calmly to rejoice under the sensible decays of nature, and the foreboding pains of dissolution.

IRECKON, saith Paul^b, and scarce a mortal possessing flesh and blood was able to compute better, *that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us: ourselves which have the*
first

^a Lev. xiv.

^b Rom. viii. 18—23.

first fruits of the spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body ^a. “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God; an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, (we groan earnestly) not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” Well then might our Saviour say, “fear not them that can kill the body, and after that they have no more that they can do ^b.”

THE eternal union which believers have with Christ their living head, concludes most powerfully in their favour, but, *because he lives, they shall live also* ^{*}; this their inviolable relation to him lifts them up on high, and sets them far above the reach of all the powers of darkness; so that when their cruelty has burnt their bodies to ashes at the stake, and their blasphemy has winnowed their ashes in the wind, in contempt of the christian doctrine of the resurrection; after all this, what have they been doing? just nothing at all, but what will turn to their *shame and everlasting contempt at the last day*; such conduct might appear like a formidable battery raised in the view of an ignorant pagan infidel; but, to the faith of a christian, no more than chaff before the wind.

EVERY

^a 2 Cor. v. 1—4.^b Luke xii. 4.^{*} John xiv. 19.

EVERY particle of dust that is ordained by infinite wisdom, power and love, to form this new, this glorious construction, that is to rise at the last day, is purchased with the precious blood of their once dying, but now-risen and exalted Saviour.

THY dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall arise : awake and sing ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead^a.

How frequently are the influences of divine grace compared to the dew of heaven; the morning dew, that precious, that pure, heavenly distillation? *thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth^b*; “I will be as the dew” “unto Israel, from me is thy fruit found^c :” what can the spiritual import of this metaphor be less than this? that when the holy spirit descends from Christ the mediator, (who is to every member of his mystical body, the church) the living head of all communicative grace; when this spirit descends at the blessed hour of regeneration, in a silent, inexplicable, yet irresistible way, infusing into their souls, quickening life and power; this heavenly principle, is in them the day-spring of the beauties of gospel-holiness, and the first dawning of eternal life.

THIS doctrine of the vital union, which all true believers have with Christ, and which is the

^a Isa. xxvi. 19. ^b Psa. cx. 3. ^c Hos. xiv. 5-8

the certain result of his covenant-relation to them, and of his redemption-purchase of them ; the apostle Paul happily improves in his different epistles to the churches, in order to support their faith, and comfort their minds, in the belief of the resurrection of the just at the last day.

THE apostle having a special occasion to treat of the doctrine of the in-dwelling of the spirit of Christ in believers, Rom. viii. 10, 11. observes, that those who have this living spirit of Christ in their souls, are nevertheless mortal creatures, and liable every day to the stroke of death : this he allows, and gives a reason why it is so, and proposes a consideration of great weight to support believers against the fear of it at the same time ; “ the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life, because of righteousness ;” *q. d. it is owned,* “ *that the bodies of the saints do remain* “ *under the sentence of undergoing the pains of* “ *a temporal death and dissolution ; (for such is* “ *the will of God ;)* *but the spirit is alive be-* “ *cause of righteousness, as being justified by the* “ *righteousness of Christ, and as having the spi-* “ *rit of grace in them :*” and from hence he concludes, that if this spirit of living grace as proceeding from God the Father, and from Christ the mediator dwell in them, *the spirit of him, that is, of God the Father, who raised up Christ from the dead, shall, at the resurrection of the just, quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you,*

to Col. iii. 1—4. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ, in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

IN the last place is to be considered in what sense we are to consider death as being destroyed, and that as the *very last of the enemies of the saints.*

OF some of the enemies of the people of God it has been already noted, that there shall be an utter, and everlasting destruction of their power, and influence, but not of their being; “so Christ by death hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” Heb. ii. 14. “and for this end was Christ made manifest that he might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John iii. 8.

SUCH will be the final doom of the impenitent sinner, and of all the implacable enemies of God, of Christ, and of his gospel; these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power^a; setting them at an everlasting distance from the enjoyment of all that is truly good and desirable, and consigning them over to the eternal endurance of all that is evil and distressing; so then annihilation, the very last wish of the miserable, will be denied them

^a 2 Thes. i. 9.

them ; all being included in the emphatical and fearful doom, *depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels* *.

THEREFORE if the word death being understood in its full latitude, includes in it every thing that can make a reasonable intelligent being miserable ; then to have death destroyed is to have every thing done away, removed, annihilated, that can make one any way uneasy, and to be placed in the full enjoyment of every thing that can make him for ever happy.

WE from henceforth, in our thoughts, consider the departed soul as instantly leading on the immense continent of a happy eternity, leaving its once dear associate, the body, to be inclosed for a while within the darkness of a tomb ; while the happy spirit itself is full with love to God, and likeness to him, in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

When once transported to th' eternal shore,
Souls thus remov'd, revisit earth no more ;
Engross'd with joys of a superior kind,
They leave the trifling cares of life behind.

Anonym.

Rev. xx. 10—14. The devil, the beast, the false prophet, death and hell, were cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, and are tormented day and night for ever and ever.—This is the second death.

* Mat. xxv. 41.

* Fearful expressions these of the seat and center of all that is miserable, without hope and without end.

BUT our present province lies not in an enlargement on the employments and pleasures of blessed souls in a separate state, but with the happiness of the righteous, as in all respects compleat at the resurrection.

WE therefore consider the bodies of the saints when committed to the ground, *dust to dust*, as under the special care and protection of that God, whose power first made, whose eye beholds, and whose power supports the whole system of the universe, even every atom of it; so that it ought to give no uneasiness to the pious mind, whether the particles are deposited near the surface of the earth, or could they be buried as deep as the center: whether they lie near together, or whether they should be scattered asunder, as distant as the poles of heaven; all that concerns the faith of a christian, is what the infinitely wise, powerful, and faithful God hath said in his holy word, concerning the relation the saints stand in to Christ their living head; who hath told them *that he goeth to heaven to prepare a place for them, that where he is there they may be also, and because he liveth, and as certainly as he liveth, they shall live also.* Every atom that is decreed to form the new structure, is purchased with the precious blood of the lamb; and those bodies which when alive, and entire, were then the temples of the living God, as such shall be raised up again, no more to return to corruption, but to be repossessed by the eternal spirit, and fill'd with everlasting light, life and glory.

HUMAN minds are apt to entertain gloomy and distressing imaginations concerning the situation of the body, during its continuance in a state of separation ; much of this may be owing to the misunderstanding or the wrong use of these dark images which we so frequently find in the sacred scriptures ; these solemn and awful figures so used and so much enlarged upon in funeral orations were not designed by the inspired writers, to damp the faith and hope of the saints, and cast a melancholy gloom over the beautiful face of true religion, *all whose ways are pleasantness, and her paths peace*^a ; but to mortify the excessive pride and vanity of human nature, to curb as much as may be our exorbitant love of earthly things, to keep our spirits off from an over eager pursuit after the honours, profits or pleasures of the present world, and to form and dispose the spirit for a more habitual exercise of mind for heavenly things, *since to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

SUCH subjects as these are truly exceeding good preservatives against the too growing influence of earthly things : and what christian living, stands not in need of such cautions, motives and incitements ? such means as these Christ and his apostles used ; but at the same time as need is found for such keen methods to curb the luxuriance of the human passions ; so are there found in the gospel many strong cordials to support the fainting mind of humble christians, lest they should be swallowed up

^a Prov. iii. 17.

of over much heaviness, or be too much cast down at the near views of death, and the awful thought of changing worlds.

DARKNESS, dust, worms, and corruption, have, to the human thought, something terrifying; but they are only so to the imagination, and at a distance; but to a saint asleep in Jesus, they are really nothing, since the principles of death, which then so powerfully tend towards an absolute dissolution, have nothing in them that can give the deceased the least disturbance; *they enter into peace, they rest in their beds each one walking in his uprightness* ^a.

They undisturb'd their peaceful station keep,
And earthquakes only rock them in their sleep*.

NOR can the length of time these have to continue in this darkness be any cause of uneasiness to the departed spirit; suppose it be ever so long, even from Adam, to the last age of the world; unless, you will suppose, as some have done, that the separate spirit continues wishing and longing for the happy moment of its re-union with its beloved body; but this favours so much of a degree, at least of imperfection, and infelicity, that I chuse rather to dismiss the subject, than examine any further into it; let what has been noted in this part, then be considered as a transition from our former, to our remaining subject, to which we now proceed.

THE

^a Isa. lvii. 2.

^{*} Sir Richard Blackmore.

The apostle in the chapter before us, having said, ver. 40, "there are bodies celestial, and "bodies terrestrial, and that the glory of the "celestial is one, and that the glory of the terrestrial is another;" from thence he goes on to explain and illustrate this comparison, and among other things he gives us a four-fold antithesis.

On the one side is set, "it is sown in corruption*, in dishonour, in weakness, a natural body;"

On the other side is placed, "it is raised in incorruption, in glory, in power, a spiritual body."

When the preposition *in* is thus added, and repeated on both sides of the opposition, this gives great force to the illustration; and is as much as though it had been said, "the body "of the believer that is put into the earth, a "poor, corrupt, lifeless, weak, helpless lump "of clay, shall return to life again, beautiful, "strong, vigorous, full of splendour, full of "immortal, undecaying glory."

VER. 42. *So also is the resurrection of the dead.*

It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; so is the resurrection of the dead; that though the body be laid in the

A a grave

* It is sown in corruption &c. The word *sown* seems to be analogous to the type before made use of, viz. of the *first fruits*, ver. 20. *i. e.* the produce of such grain as was first sown, or cast into the ground; and ver. 36. Thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, &c. so here the body is *sown*, *i. e.* the body is laid in the ground, and buried in a condition of decay and corruption.

grave, as a prey to worms and dust, it shall be raised in a state of incorruption.

By incorruption I apprehend, that the body at the resurrection will be so formed as to have none of the seeds of mortality mingled with it, or cleaving to it; it shall then be invulnerable, impenetrable, and no more capable of any painful impression, than the soul itself is.

2dly. *It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory:*

THE body is committed to the ground devoid of all the true and real ornaments of nature, such as youth, health, and beauty bring with them; being now a dull, gloomy, disagreeable object, so as to put the nearest and dearest friends under the necessity of removing it out of sight, as soon as it can be done with decorum, and decency; but it shall be raised from the dead *in glory*, and full of glory; able both to receive and possess a fullness of the most solid, substantial, sterling glory; every part, every limb, every line, every feature will beam forth with strong rays of splendour; *they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever*^a; Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father^b.

3dly. *IT is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power. It is sown in weakness; i.e.* the saints bodies are not only laid in the grave in so weak and helpless a condition, as not to be

^a Dan. xii. 3. ^b Mat. xiii. 43.

be able to throw off, or resist, the principles of corruption, which from the time of death are growing continually upon them; but even in life, they are not capable to bear, either pleasure or pain, disgrace or glory, to any great degree; and if experiments could be properly tried, it would be found, that the one would prove as mortal as the other.

BUT, on the contrary, at the last day, the bodies of the saints shall be raised in power; *i.e.* of such principles, and of such a firm texture, as to be able to support under a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

4thly. *IT is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, so are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

IT is sown a natural body; having had natural propensities, inclinations, and sensations, as

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other animal bodies have ; and therefore must live and have this animal life supported in a natural way, suitable to the wants and necessities of an animal, or natural body ; but at the resurrection, this body being formed for an undecaying immortal life, no more needing its former supports and assistances, all those natural, and animal inclinations and propensities will be for ever removed.

THE first man is of the earth, earthy—as is the earthy so also are they that are earthy : still tending downward to the earth, especially since the fall ; Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return, is the unalterable sentence of the great, the eternal God.

BUT this body which comes into the world with so many weaknesses, and low propensities, shall be raised from the dust of death a spiritual body : altogether so, so far as matter and substance purified, and cleared from every gross alloy that can be supposed are capable.

THE words of the apostle (*as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*—*The second man is the Lord from heaven*) will afford a reflection which will serve to conclude this part of the present subject.

IT were much to be wished that all serious sensible christians (as God may give them abilities and opportunities) would make this doctrine of their union with Christ, their more constant, their more peculiar, their chosen study. This very point might be well improved

proved into a volume ; and some protestant authors have succeeded happily in it, by setting it in a variety of useful lights * : but what I now intend is, that this doctrine of union with Christ is an exceeding fruitful, comfortable soul-supporting doctrine ; to assist the serious sincere christian in his meditating and devotional hours, against those distressing and misgiving fears he is so apt to entertain, in consideration of the slow progress he seems to gain, and his present unfitness for heaven : let such humble dejected souls consider that while the gospel so much urges and presses the believer to have the highest regard to holiness of heart and life ; yet still the gospel shews him, at the same time, that Christ is *made unto him sanctification* as well as *righteousness*, for justification. That from him *is their fruit found* ; that Christ is in them the hope of glory. That they are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God ; and as certainly as Christ their living head is now in heaven, and as certainly as he hath, in their regeneration, sent his Holy Spirit into them as a life-giving spirit ; so certainly, as all this is true, upon the word of a faithful God, when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they shall also appear with him in glory, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

* See Dr. Owen on communion with God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

S E R M O N X.

Vision : or the Glory of Christ
as seen in Heaven.

I COR. XV. 28.

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the son also be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*

The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall

• And when all is subdued unto Christ, then shall Christ lay down that office, which till then he exerciseth, and in which he is conspicuous in the church ; (which he is, till then, to administer) and then shall God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, fill all the elect with glory and bliss eternally. Dr. Hammond's paraphrase on 1 Cor. xv. 28.

*shall be unto thee an everlasting light,
and thy God thy glory, Isa. lx. 19.*

*And I saw no temple therein: for the
Lord God Almighty, and the lamb are
the temple of it.*

*And the city had no need of the sun, nei-
ther of the moon to shine in it; for the
glory of God did lighten it, and the
lamb is the light thereof, Rev. xxi.
22, 23.*

THOUGH, as before noted, there be a close connection, in the way of argument, through the whole paragraph; there seems to be an intermediate one between the 24th ver. and the 28th ver. where the text is: in ver. 24, saith the apostle, *now cometh the end*: now what this end is, is in some part explained before, and is in the words of the text brought to a final issue; here the words, subdued, and subject, though in many human cases they may seem near alike, yet are here plainly distinguished; and will at last appear vastly different from any other kind of subduction, or subjection ever seen in the whole creation of God.

In the text the end of all things is fixed once and for ever; an end to which all other ends and purposes, under God, are still subordinate, and beyond which they can never go, viz. *that God may be all in all.*

THE parts of the text that are to be explained and improved are,

- I. ALL things are said to be subdued unto him.
- II. THE son is said to be subject unto him that put all things under him.
- III. THE eternal result of the whole, viz. that God may be all in all.

WHEN the Israelites had gathered, and had made their offering of the first fruits, it is but natural to suppose, there must be some proper distance of time between the dedication of these offerings, and the full compleat harvest; so here it is most just and rational to suppose it must be as to the resurrection of the saints; this the words imply, *But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. To which is added, then cometh the end.*

THE end intended is the end of all things; the end of the world^a; the dissolution of all things as to their present form and manner of existence; for though the world of spirits, angels, and men, the souls of men, as also some part of the material world will continue in being; yet they will exist in circumstances vastly different from what they are now in^{*}.

THE sacred scriptures have represented this ultimately fixed, unalterable state of reasonable

^a Matt. xiii. 39, 40. 1 Pet. iv. 7. 2 Pet. iii. 11.

^{*} The alteration, or the increase of the happiness of the good angels hereafter is not in our enquiry.

able beings in a state, either of happiness or misery, both in plain language, and in figures borrowed from things of the present world, with all the force that human words can give, or which the mind of man in this mortal life can conceive; all implying that saints in the other world, will be perfectly, and for ever happy, without measure, without change, without end; and, on the other hand, that sinners, living and dying so, will be punished by the great God in a most inexpressibly terrible and dreadful manner.

FINALLY, the expression in the text, *then cometh the end*, intends the last finishing stroke, which Christ, as the appointed king and governor of the world, will give to the administration of divine providence, and grace; which is to be all resolved into this, *his giving up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.*

WE have in the former sermon considered Christ as triumphing over Satan, sin, and death; which is also called his destroying them: in the text in hand we have another word used instead of the former, and in some respects different from it; though for Satan to have his power and dominion (which is by the means of sin) utterly broken, and for ever destroyed, and for death, so far as relates to the saints, to be absolutely annihilated, even so far as for *mortality to be swallowed up of life*, must needs be his subduing them in the very highest and fullest sense; but we are
here

here to find out an intermediate sense in which the word *subdued* is to be understood; and which is a branch of the former subject, more properly, *viz.* that *Christ must reign.*

ACCORDING to this delegation from God the Father, we consider Christ as king and lord of the whole universe; and as having under his command, subjects of all kinds, of all ranks, of all degrees, and of all tempers; some natural subjects without life, sense, or reason*; others endowed with rational powers capable of moral government, such as these are mankind, and as such they are accountable to him: some are his dutiful and loyal subjects, such are the good angels; some are disloyal and rebellious, such are the evil angels; and such are all mankind by nature, by means of the fall of Adam; some of these have been already conquered and subdued by the power of divine grace, and many more will before the end of time.

THE fallen angels, and the implacably wicked, though they are not the subjects of divine grace, yet are they under the controul of providence; *the hearts of kings are in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth them as he*

* Lord of the armies of the sky,
He marshals all the stars;

Red comets lift their banners high,
And wide proclaim his wars.

Dr. WATTS.

In this sense is to be understood the 104th, 143d, and 149th Psalm, where all things are called upon to praise their creator.

the rivers of water^a: and even the very worst part of the very worst of men, their wrath, their rage^a, their blasphemy shall be overruled so as to answer the final end and purpose of the glory of God. *Surely the wrath of men shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath wilt thou restrain*^b. In this respect Christ hath his providential throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all^c.

THIS doctrine we owe to the gospel, and it is one of the great mysteries contained in it.

NATURAL religion will teach men that God is the creator of the world, that he is the superintendent of it, that he is the judge of all the earth and will do right^d; but we have it most plainly and abundantly revealed in the gospel, that God the Father hath committed all judgment to the son^e; and that he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead^f.

THE grand question which hath been in dispute between God and his creatures ever since the fall of Adam (which question was first raised by Satan in paradise) is hastening to its final and everlasting determination, viz. whether

^a Prov. xxi. 1.

^c Read the history of Pharaoh, Balaam, Sennacherib, &c.

^b Psal. lxxvi. 10.

^e Psal. ciii 19.

^d Gen.

xviii. 25.

^f John v. 22.

Acts xvii. 30, 31.

whether God shall govern the world, give laws to his creatures, prescribe their religion, and determine their future state, or whether all affairs, both of this world and the other, shall be left to man's discretion?

THE Jews, who continued still in their unbelief of Christ's Messiah-ship, it was the full determination of their souls, *We will not have this man to reign over us*; though they invented many ways to hide their inward dislike of him: this, Christ who was decreed to be hereafter their judge, saw through from his first coming among them; nevertheless they held on their contradiction to the last hour, till, according to his own prediction, *he sent his armies (the Romans) and burnt up their city* ^a.

THUS ever since the world began, the contention has still been about the sovereignty of God; and to this day, men, for the greater part will take the same liberty, to think as they please, and live as they please; and so it will ever be among those whom grace does not reclaim, till Christ shall send his armies of angels to burn the world ^b.

SINCE our present province is the governing and determining providence of God; if our meditation descends to the animal world, what myriads of millions of creatures in the air, earth, and sea, are propagated, fed, live, and die, perish and are lost, as to their present form and manner of existence, which never

^a Matt. xxii. 7.

^b Thess. i. 7, 8.

^c 2 Pet. iii. 3—10.

never knew what an end or design means ; but nevertheless a wise and unerring providence conducts them safe thither.

AMONG rational beings, what multitudes in life discover a mind but little above the level of brutality ; but a wise, unerring providence, conducts both them and their affairs vastly wide, and vastly above whatever they aimed at, or ever imagined.

AMONG mankind of a more elevated understanding, of a liberal education, placed by providence in easy, affluent circumstances ; how few of these, comparative to the number of them, have at heart the great end of their creation, and preservation ; how few serve their great benefactor and best friend, the eternal God, with a warm, sensible, lively devotion of heart and life to his service ; on the contrary, it is seen, for the greater part, that their time, their health, wealth, and life are consumed in vanity, luxury and dissipation : *The harp, the viol, the tabret, the pipe, and wine are in their feasts ; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands **.

A FEW, however, among all these, inspired with divine zeal and love, have the fortitude of soul, to dare to turn their back upon the *pomps and vanities of this wicked world, the sinful lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life.* The invisible things of a future world, which are set at nought, and quite disregarded

* Isa. v. 12.

garded by others, are by faith made realities to them; to these they attend as the grand scope of life, not so much looking at the things *which are seen*, because they *are but temporal*, as at the things *which are not seen*, because they *are eternal*^a; and yet, even these, notwithstanding their being moved by these heavenly principles, while they are in this life, are still in a state of imperfection, *they see but in part*, and *as through a glass, darkly*; a multitude of things serve to obstruct their views, darken their prospect, and interrupt their more steady attention of mind to those heavenly things which engage their faith and hope; but, however this they *know, that when they shall see him, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is*^b; in the mean time grace is working both in them, and for them, and shortly all these interposing clouds shall vanish away for ever.

God the Father, who worketh all things for his own glory, by Christ his Son, is said, ver. 24, to put down all rule, and all authority, and power; all this is to make way for the important hour, when *Christ himself shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the father, and be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*^{*}.

THE terms in the text are full, emphatical, universal, *all rule, all authority*, all power; i. e. all rule of one creature over another, all authority,

^a 2 Cor. iv. 18. ^b 1 John iii. 2.

* Thus the 24th and 28th verses are joined together.

thority, all right, all claim which one creature may really have, or may pretend to have one over another; as there are many false pretenders to authority, and power, amongst the various ranks and degrees of men; as an Alexander may pretend an authority to govern all the world; and Antichrist to govern all the church*: these pretended claims will be all put down, abolished and destroyed, as the annoyances and vexations of mankind.

In all ages, and under every dispensation of the church, the wisdom and goodness of God has appointed an order among mankind; pastors, teachers and deacons, are, by Christ, to instruct and govern in the church; and kings and civil magistrates are of God appointed to govern in the state; defend the natural rights and properties of all just and honest men; protect all the truly pious in the right they have to worship God, according to the light of their own consciences, and the direction of the divine word.

In both these cases, the word of God is very plain, and explicit: "Let every soul be subject to the higher power, for there is no power but of God, the powers that be, are ordained of God. †" IN

* Let this one instance of Antichrist serve instead of a thousand, to shew the exorbitant impudence of church tyranny.

† In this sense I understand such metaphorical expressions, *if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?* i. e. if the civil government, which is the political foundation, ground-work, or basis, for the

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IN the church, as to general rule and order, the word of God is as plain in the new testament; *Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men; and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith,* “and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

WE find, in many other places, the church of Christ compared to a building; *ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye are also builded together for an habitation of God, through the spirit^b; ye, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house^c:* now when this spiritual building is compleatly finished, that is to say, when the whole body of the catholic church, of which Christ is both the only foundation, and the living head is wrought

administration of public equity, justice and right; if this be erased and overturned, what can the righteous do, who for the most part are the fewest and weakest part of mankind? *all the foundations of the earth are out of course,* Psa. lxxxii. 5. implying a complaint of the laws and of public justice, the foundations of civil right and social truth.

^a Eph. iv. 8—13. ^b chap. xi. 20—22. ^c 1 Peter, ii. 5.

wrought up to that full degree of knowledge, holiness and grace, to which they were ordained in the eternal purpose of God; then all his scaffolding shall be taken down, as being of no use beyond the bounds of time. *Charity, i. e. love, never faileth, but whether there be prophecies they shall fail, whether there be tongues they shall cease, whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away; when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away; then shall the saints see face to face, and know as they are known.*

As to this part of the subject, I have to add that the vastly different ranks, stations, capacities, and degrees, of men in human life; these are all at the dispose, and solely under the command of an all-wise, over-ruling providence; kings, magistrates, judges, and subordinate officers, these have their different talents and capacities from God; their particular forms and rules of government from men, over whom they are chosen and appointed to preside; these are bound by their office to protect the sacred rights of religion, and the more general interests and properties of mankind; protect the innocent, relieve the oppressed, right the injured, and, as may be, accommodate and reconcile the differences which so often happen between man and man, and in their place, and to their power act for the good of the whole.

AMIDST all the vast immense variety of business continually transacting in the civilized

and social world, there is, to use the prophetic phrase, *a wheel within a wheel*; all under Christ, guided and over-ruled by him, for the good of his church and people.

AND here, amongst many reasons that might be offered in defence of this doctrine of the peculiar superintendency of Christ over the affairs of mankind; I will only mention two, which more immediately affect the true and pure religion of the gospel, as distinguished from all other religions in the world; though every nation, every country, every sect, every party, and even every sub-division and party of a party still think their own right.

AND here I will only remind, that through the whole of this subject, I endeavour still to keep the government of Christ in view; whoever thinks this method too narrow, or chooses to write upon the doctrine of providence, in a more general way, they are at full liberty to think as they please; I will not contend with them, but pursue my first design.

1st. an exalted Saviour, who holds the government of the world in his own hand, and steers the helm of all human affairs, well knows that his kingdom, though it be part of it in this world, is not of it, as being of a temper and cast vastly wide from that of the carnal part of mankind; and upon the whole, but in comparison, a small number, a *little Rock*; and of these not many rich, not many noble, hath God called, but on the contrary,
the

the poor, the base, the despised hath God chosen^a, that they may be rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom^b; all this Christ knows, and therefore provides by his providence, a strange, powerful, worldly defence for their lives, liberties and religion accordingly.

AND since the gospel cannot be maintained without some considerable expence, some rich and wealthy, some noble are called, though *not many*; these he inspires to contribute generously and open-handedly to maintain the gospel, relieve the poor saints, help the necessitous, relieve the oppressed, visit the sick, and do all the kind and good offices which become the saints of Christ, and members of the same mystical body^c.

2dly. the true and pure religion of Christ, is so far from being like that of the world, that it provokes the enmity of the wicked; Christ gives his disciples to expect that the world would hate them, and gives the reasons for it, and why they should not be shocked at it; *if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you^c*; and upon this very account Christ in his prayer to his heavenly father most affectionately and repeatedly recommends them to his protection and care.—*Holy Father keep through thine own*

B b 2

name

^a 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. ^b James ii. 5. ^c John xv. 18, 19.

name those whom thou hast given me.——I have given them thy word and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; I pray not thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil, &c.^a

I CANNOT conclude without reflecting how exceedingly happy they must needs be, who are, by a loving compassionate Saviour, recommended to the patronage of a covenant-God, who still secures them, and provides for them accordingly : *O Israel, fear not, saith the Lord, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine : when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee ; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ; for I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel thy Saviour ; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life^b * : When Christ was on the point of leaving the world, and going to heaven, to be seen no more, till the restitution of all things, he took sufficient care to leave his church in safe hands ; *my Father which gave them me, saith Christ, is greater than**

^a John xvii. 14—14, 15. ^b Isa. xliii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

* I will be with thee as thine, and will preserve thee as mine. Charnock on the place.

than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands ^a.

THIS vast stage of the world, raised at first by almighty power, and still under-propt by omnipotence, has ever since the beginning, been a stage of rebellion; on this vast theatre have been continually transacting, with various appearances of success or defeat on either side, the important conflicts between sin and grace; but nevertheless, even from the first establishment of Satan's kingdom upon earth, it hath been doomed by the decree of heaven to everlasting ruin; and notwithstanding its present appearing triumph, it is still in the main, and upon the whole, on the losing hand; so certain it is, that Satan shall in the conclusion never gain his end, and God will never lose his.

WHOEVER reads the bible with study, and impartial diligence, will find this observation true; that from Adam's receiving the first promise, and onward, throughout the whole patriarchal, and mosaic dispensations, by the means of revelations and prophecies, these discoveries of grace and salvation by a promised Messiah, were like the light of the morning, growing more and more towards a perfect day: and even in the very darkest times, and at the very lowest ebb of true religion; divine revelation was still gaining some, and gathering them out of the vast dark kingdom of Satan, and translating them into the kingdom of God: a

B b 3

faith-

^a John x. 29.

faithful Abel, a preaching Noah, a righteous Lot, a believing Abraham, a patient Job are still found : and where some have, in successive ages, lost their lives in the cause of God, and of the true religion ; yet even these, (such was the will of God) that they should leave behind them such a testimony for revealed truth, that should stand to the world's end, as *Abel being dead, yet speaketh* ^a. In the time of Elijah the prophet, when he thought himself alone, his life in extreme danger, yet God had in reserve seven thousand true and faithful worshippers ^b ; and, as the sum total of the faithful in those gloomy ages, Paul gives it thus in general (for arithmetick could not grasp it) *as the stars in the sky, and as the sand on the sea-shore, all these died in faith* ^b.

AND when our Saviour came into the world, and made his appearance in his publick ministry, amidst all the temptations of Satan, the calumnies of the wicked Jews, and all that thick black cloud which still conspired to veil his divinity from the eyes of mis-judging mortals, still salvation was making its way towards its meridian : *I, saith Christ, if I am lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me* ^c.

AFTER our Lord's ascension, though there was a bright sun-shine for a time, when great numbers were adding daily of such as should be saved, who *walking in the fear of the Lord,*
and

^a Heb. xi. 4.

^b Chap. xi. 13.

^c John xii. 32.

and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied^a; yet, in process of time, there was a great overshadowing of the horizon of the christian church: in the East by the spread of the Arian heresy, and the imposture of Mahomet; in the West by Anti-christ:

At the first reformation from popery, there appeared much of the life, and power of christianity, among many of the professors of it; but protestant churches are for the most part exceedingly declined, and a cloud is upon their glory: pride, vanity, worldly-mindedness, error, and irreligion have a large and wide spread amongst us; and too many give room for St. Paul's complaint, *all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's^b*. But all this is no more than what we are often warned of in the New Testament, as what will most certainly come to pass before the end of the world. In the last days, *perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous—unholy—high-minded—lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God^c*. In the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, *where is the promise of his coming^d?*

ALL these changes and vicissitudes, the outward face and appearance of religion has often undergone hitherto; and what more, or greater changes it must still pass under, is not easy to determine; however, here we may rest

B b 4

with

^a Acts ix. 31. ^b Phil. ii. 21. ^c 2 Tim. iii. 2, 3, 4. ^d 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

with the most steady faith, and unshaken confidence, *that the foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his*: and lest any should be filled with a vain confidence of their own strength, that may tempt them into a loose and careless conversation, dishonourable to religion, and ruinous to the souls of men; let this caution be taken along with it, *let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*^a.

THOSE who live under the gospel, notwithstanding all its trials, afflictions, crosses, and worldly disappointments, have, upon the whole, vastly the advantage of those who lived before them, either under the patriarchal, or the mosaic dispensation, both as to light and liberty: happy are those professors of the christian religion, who from their inmost soul esteem the purity and simplicity of the gospel its greatest glory.

I HAVE always, according to my abilities, been free and open to declare my heart's belief in this matter; that, as a studied conformity to the fashions of this world, is an evident departure from the simplicity of the gospel-rule on the one hand, so superstitious niceties, and slovenly monkery, are no part of the true religion of Jesus. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*^b.

WE, who in some more special articles, profess to follow the strict purity of the gospel,
both

^a 2 Tim. ii. 19.

^b Matt. v. 8.

both as to its doctrines and rules of worship, are frequently taught, both by sermons and printed publications, to expect that the latter day-glory is drawing near; and the more because there seems to be an abridgment of the external rigor of the ecclesiastical power of Anti-christ; but I could heartily wish that some who profess strongly to believe this doctrine of what we commonly call the latter day-glory, have not, in some sort, mistook the thing; or however have but slightly thought upon some things which to me appear to be very material parts of it: or however it be as to that, I could wish them often well to consider of it.

PURITY of heart, to have the affection set upon heavenly things, to seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God; close walking with God; fervent charity to poor saints; sincere pity for mankind, as in their sinful state; near and frequent communion with God; to bear the lively image of Christ; to have every heavenly grace shine forth in the heart and life; to be dead to the world, and worldly things: these, my friends! are all of them very solemn things; and these, if I judge right, will make up the greater part of the glory of those times: And, believe it, those who are to bear a part in that glory must be well refined and prepared for it; by what means, or by what trials, afflictions, or persecutions before-hand, God only knows; but however that
may

may be, a spirit, a temper, a life and conduct, vastly wide of what is now found in the most, must and will be most certainly *; and these scriptures which most abound with assurances of such a time, and that give us the most lively displays of it, still abound with presages of fiery trials to fit and prepare men for it. "Some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, to purge, and to make them white even unto the end of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them which obey not the gospel of God? and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? We, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Wherefore beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

WHAT feeble ideas can a poor weak mortal, at this distance, form of a church upon earth

* What glory (said one) is brought to God, or what benefit is brought to the souls of men by the overthrow of popery if protestants are no better?

earth thus described; as by a view taken from the summit of some *exceeding high mountain, of the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*^a? this and many other passages, both of the Old and New Testament, look near alike to the state of the blessed above, that I believe many very sensible and studious christians have taken the one for the other*.

LET no one think that by this time I have lost sight of my subject, or am got beyond it; to convince my readers I am not, I would only desire them to consider the following things.

1st. WHAT is the true and proper nature of gospel-grace.

WITH this we begun, John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* This begun-work of eternal life, Christ is still pro-

^a Rev. xxi. 1, 2—9, 10. to the end of the chapter.

* Compare this with Heb. xii. 22, 23. "Ye are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first-born which are written in heaven," &c. Isa. liv. 10, 11, 12. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee. Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires; and I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones."

promoting and carrying on in his Church by his spirit and grace, by his word, his ordinances and providences; so that this extraordinary effusion of the spirit in the latter day of the world, or towards the last end of time, is still no more than a greater degree of the same things; as regeneration and effectual calling are but the infancy and childhood of grace, and this grace possessed and enjoyed in the latter day of the world, is but the spiritual man in his more full stature and proportion, as glory itself is but the final and ultimate proportion of that stature, Ephes. iv. 13.

2dly. The apostle Paul's argument, 2 Cor. v. 17. turns upon this very point. *Now if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.*

ALL who make profession of their faith in Christ, do, in their baptism, profess to be *risen with Christ by faith of the operation of God^a*, to be new creatures; and it will be expected by others, (whatever themselves may think,) that they discover a heavenly temper, and live henceforth a heavenly life, being the divine workmanship of God, *created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that they should walk in them^b.*

3dly. LET any one who truly understands and believes what the nature of grace is, from

^a Col. ii. 12. Chap. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4.
ii. 10.

^b Ephes.

from whom it at first came, in whose hand it is, and under whose care it is; what an almighty, an all-gracious God has designed it for, and will at last bring it to, together with the many exceeding great and precious promises that are made to it, and also what prodigious improvements God can even in this life make in it: put all these together, and then, we may from the whole form our judgment, in some part at least, what christians may hope and expect before the end of the world.

WHAT less than this can such prophecies mean? *There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old^a.—Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, as the light of seven days^b. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the sight of all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God^c.*

BEHOLD my servant shall be exalted—and extolled, and be very high. *As—his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men; so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for things which had not been told them, shall they see; and that which they had*

^a Isa. lxxv. 20.
lii. 8, 9, 10.

^b Chap. xxx. 26.

^c Chap.

had not heard shall they consider^a. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them in that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them^b.

IF we understand *the light of the sun*, Isa. xxx. 26. according to that subject of grace, I have endeavoured hitherto to describe, this will not be a dazzling, broad, wandering, dead light; but a vivacious, keen, living light. In this very sense, John the Baptist was, for a short time, a burning and a shining light. And this is that spirit of the Lord's mouth, that sharp two edged sword, coming out of the mouth of Christ^c, * that brightness of Christ's appearing with which he will destroy and consume Anti-christ, that wicked one.

SOME have made a wonder of it, that sin, enormous sin, especially, the vilest thing that ever could possess a rational soul, should ever arrive to that barefaced impudence as to put sincere godliness out of countenance; triumph over it, trample upon it, and tempt so many in the world to be afraid and ashamed to own it. That godliness has hitherto been overcome by numbers, vastly so hitherto, is too plain for any one to deny. Some farther add, that vice for the far greater part gets the fashion
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^a Isa. lii. 13, 14, 15.

^b Zech. xii. 8.

* I have hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth.

^c Hof. vi. 5.

of the world on its side; so that having the countenance of the great, the rich, the wealthy, and not only so, but having their example on their side, they dare, under their countenance be audaciously wicked without controul; but say these, when piety, virtue, and godliness, become the general fashion of the world, men will be ashamed to be openly wicked for want of countenance, and for want of company.

But to say that in those happy times, men will be ashamed to be openly wicked for want of company, though there may be truth in it, and why not since we see it so now in some places, and on the same occasions? yet this is not all the truth, for the light and grace of the saints will then shine so bright, and with beams so keen and piercing, that the hypocrites, the formal and prophane, will then find their consciences extremely pained and tormented with it: for I am not here supposing a state of absolute perfection, saints without a spot, or a world without some sinners in it.

I MIGHT much enlarge here, in proofs and instances, both from scripture and from the infinitely contrary nature of sin and grace, which may be said intensely to hate, and abhor one another, and proportionably as each are working up towards their own proper point or center. I have only two or three short remarks to make here, since I have no intent to write largely on the subject of the latter day-glory; this has been done agreeably

ably and profitably by many already, and to which I will not pretend to add any thing.

WHEN we read of the nations beating their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and shall learn war no more; doubtless, amidst such profound peace and concord as will then be between one nation and another, the subjects of each will maintain liberty of conscience, so that every one will be allowed to think freely for himself; but if any imagine from hence, that because persecution, fines, inquisitions, fires and faggots are now no more; that therefore persons will be at liberty to think any thing, and believe any thing, if any such thing shall then continue, they will find the light of the gospel as keen as lightning, and as destructive; nor needs human aid or force here. *The rod of the stem of Jesse—The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord: and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked^a.*

I HAVE

^a Isa. xi. 1, 2, 3, 4.

I HAVE only to add, that the scriptures, one and all, which have any more near and evident relation to the spiritual glory of the gospel in the last days of the world, they still tend to exhort men to follow after holiness^a; to seek after the strictest holiness of heart and life; to let the wicked know, that for a sinner to be then an enormous sinner, a sinner of an hundred years old^b; such an one will be accursed, *i. e.* the detestation of mankind; for deceivers, hypocrites and empty professors of religion, whose whole life is an empty shew, if such will approach so near the line, they must live miserable lives; because those almost perpendicular beams of grace, will scald and scorch their consciences most dreadfully^{*}; while the slothful, the covetous, the lazy, the luke-warm, the Laodicean, will there (if any such can be then found) make a most shameful appearance,

But unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall; and ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I do this, saith the Lord of hosts.

THE last thing we have to consider is Christ's giving up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and the end of it, that God may be all in all.

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WHAT

^a Isa. xi. 1, 2, 3, 4.

^b Isa. lxxv. 20.

^{*} Acts vii. 54. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed upon him with their teeth—they cried out—they stopped their ears—they ran upon him with one accord. ver. 57.

WHAT the kingdom of Christ is, has been shewn in the foregoing sermons, as also to what high ends and purposes and the extent and duration of it, which is fixed and certain; viz. till all enemies are made his foot-stool, put under him, and subdued unto him, or by him: the next thing is Christ's giving up this delegated, or mediatorial kingdom, to God the Father, who gave it to him to bring about thereby the designs of his providence and grace.

THINGS being supposed to be so far finished and compleated; it only remains to say something of the moments of the manner of Christ's delivering up this kingdom to his Father, and explain, briefly, the reason here given; viz. That God may be all in all, which must needs be the end of the whole subject.

THIS of Christ's giving up this kingdom to his Father, is placed in scripture, at the conclusion of the last general judgment.

THIS may be well called, by way of difference and to distinguish it from all other, a general judgment; and for eminence, the last day, as being for the transactions of it, the most general, the most solemn, strict, clear and final.

IT maybe also further observed, that Christ's coming to the last and general judgment, is represented to us in the word of God, according to those different characters and relations he stands in either to mankind in general, as God their creator, their rightfull governor, and their judge; or to his own people in particular,

as

as the mediator, and as their saviour and redeemer.

WHEN God was about to bring the egregious Sodomites to a sudden and fearful judgment, previous to their final arraignment at the last day; the faith of Abraham rested in it, that God, the judge of all the earth, would do right, and that he would not destroy the righteous with the wicked *.

SOMETIMES, and once in particular, Christ is represented as coming in the character of a shepherd; when the chief shepherd shall appear^b &c. and the parable, Mat. xxv. 32. describes things accordingly; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; *i. e.* Christ will at that day discover every man's true character, with as much exactness and certainty as a shepherd can distinguish a sheep from a goat.

SOMETIMES Christ is represented as sitting upon the throne of judgment, with the awful dignity and grandeur of such kings and emperors; who in former ages were wont to seat themselves on a throne of judgment, to try capital cases, such as rebellion, and high treason *.

THE great rules of this most awful procedure, are the law and the gospel, according to St. Paul's representation. "There is no respect of persons with God, for as many as have sinned

C c 2

* Gen. xviii. 25.

^b 1 Pet. v. 4.

* Prov. xx. 8. is thought to have this sense; A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment, scattereth, away all evil with his eyes.

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without law, these shall perish without law ; and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law :” and as our Lord himself turns over the hardened and impenitent Jews to this judgment seat ; “ do not think that I will accuse you unto the father, there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust ; for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me ; for he wrote of me, for if ye believe not his writings, how can ye believe my words ?”

ST. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, describes the procession of that day thus ; “ the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire ; taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

THIS is one part.

THE other part is, “ when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”

LET us now read over our Lord’s sentence, passed on both sides of the tribunal, and then make some remarks upon it.

Mat. xxv. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

THEN shall the king say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation

* 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9, 10.

tion of the world ; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat ; thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked and ye cloathed me ; sick, and ye visited me ; in prison, and ye came unto me.

T H E N shall the righteous answer him, saying, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee ? then shall the king answer,—verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

T H E N shall the king say unto them on his left hand, depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ; for I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat, &c.—Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me ; so that those on the left hand are charged with a temper and conduct directly contrary to that of the righteous on the right hand, and their sentences are accordingly.

R E M A R K I.

OUR Lord and saviour, both as the king and judge of the world, from whose sentence there is no appeal, begins at the very place where the gospel begins, and from whence the whole of salvation proceeds ; come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ; to this agreeth exactly, what we have, Ephes. i. 3, 4, 5, 6. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, “ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ,

according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unblamable before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will."

R E M A R K II.

AT the end of this divine benediction, is placed a compendious recollection of their good works; *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat, &c.*

WHAT doth all this recollection of good works contain, either more or less than what St. Paul calls the *fruit of the spirit*, Gal. v. 22, 23. *which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; or, in a word, benevolence, fervent love, and charity, so much universally recommended, and insisted upon in the sacred scriptures, especially in the new testament; we have several abridgments of this nature in other places.*

LOVE is the fulfilling of the law ^a.

LOVE to God is the first and great commandment.

TO love thy neighbour as thyself, is like unto it.

ON these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets ^b.

R E M A R K III.

WHEN our Lord replies to those words, *when saw we thee an hungred? &c. Verily I say*

^a Rom. xiii. 8—10. ^b Mat. xxii. 38, 39, 40.

say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me : this our Lord's reply, is an affectionate owning the graces of his own spirit in them, which is but, as it were, the reflection of the divine image ; *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him* *.

R E M A R K IV.

IN these good works above-mentioned, are implied and included all other good works, inasmuch as where these good works of charity are found, other good works will not be wanting ; when Christ saith, ye have done it unto the least of my brethren, it imports that these good works are done from no mean, selfish, or sordid principle, but from love for God's sake, and for Christ's sake ; and as Christ told his disciples, *a cup of cold water given in his name*, and because a poor necessitous man *belongs to Christ*, verily, (saith he) *he that giveth it, shall not lose his reward* * ; Mark ix. 41. and all the rest where this christian grace of love is not found will be set at nothing ; 1 Cor. xiii.

AND where the zealous weakneses of men, (for who is without some ?) have tacked works and grace together, thereby to recommend themselves or their doings to God ; all

C c 4

this

* 1 John iv. 16.

* A cup of cold water is here mentioned to teach us that the poorest man living may have it in his power to do some offices of love, and those who do not, will at last be found without excuse.

this will be burnt up as wood, hay and stubble, with the fire of that day, that only the works of grace may shine.

R E M A R K V.

WHEN to them on the left hand Christ saith, *inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these, ye did it not to me*; it is implied, that in them was found a total absence of all those heavenly graces that serve to make up the true christian character; and as St. Paul saith, "now if any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

R E M A R K VI.

FROM this succinct account, Matt. xxv, which, to me, seems the the most comprehensive and definitive of any one I meet with in the new testament; I would further observe,

THAT by the judge's placing all mankind under this grand division, and then giving a final sentence accordingly; it appears that, at that instant, so strong a light will immediately proceed from the deity, as to shine at once through the whole procession; so as to give full conviction to every man's own conscience, what his state is, and from what principle he has been acted and moved in his conduct, whether good or bad, during this mortal life; whether religiously and sincerely, or whether falsely or hypocritically; whether seriously, or pro-

prophanely ; whether candidly or maliciously ; and also so much of every man's character will be seen into by others, as shall be thought by infinite wisdom, fully sufficient to vindicate the holiness and justice of God, in acquitting the one, and in condemning the other ; confirming at once, and for ever, that awful truth, the hypocrites and the prophane have still dared, by their practice to deny : *Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering*^a ; *there is no darkness or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*^b ; *his eyes are upon the ways of man, and pondereth all his goings*^c ; *when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel*^d.

In the words, *come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, is contained the sum and substance of *Christ's delivering up the kingdom to God even the Father*.

THIS is, (speaking in human form) *Christ's delivering up the insignia of his office* ; and his saying to them on his right hand, *come ye blessed*, and at the same time pronouncing the emphatical, and efficacious curse, *depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels* ; all this is a full evidence that *Christ has fully, at once, and for ever executed every part of that mediatorial work, which was by God the Father assigned to him, and that he has fully done all and every thing that was expected from him ;*
and

^a Job xxvi. 6. ^b Job xxxiv. 22. ^c Prov. v. 21.
^d Rom. ii. 16,

and on the other part, that God the Father had given to him the full revenue and purchase of his blood, to be his crown of glory for ever, while the enemies of his government are for ever under his footstool.

THE only thing yet remaining to consider is, how Christ may be said to be subject unto him [that put all things under him, *i. e.* God the Father ; how Christ's giving up the kingdom to the Father, and himself being subject unto him, make way for the Father's being all in all ; and how the glory of Christ will be seen in it, or through it.

WHAT Christ is, both by nature, and by office, has been, in a sort, the whole of our subject hitherto ; all that remains is, how we are to conceive of him, when out of office ; and what glory he will then retain perfectly consistent with *God himself, his being all in all.*

WHEN some great personage of the first rank both by birth and titles ; and moreover suppose this honourable person to have committed to his management, the highest offices in the state, such as embassies, negociations, public treaties ; or according to the present subject, suppose him the captain-general of the army, and suppose him to have finished all his important business ; put a full and final end to the most dangerous and destructive wars, procured and settled a firm and lasting peace, upon the most honourable and advantageous terms, producing the greatest riches and plenty ; supposing all this to be fully and compleatly done, what has he more to do, than to sit down and
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rest, and for ever enjoy the honour and glory of his victories and successes, and the immortal, eternal pleasures of making every loyal subject safe, easy and happy?

THUS the great redeemer, in prophecy, is represented as taking the most exalted, the most inexpressible pleasure in the infallible success of his mediatorial undertaking. *I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved; therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth, my flesh also shall rest in hope.—Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore^a.*

WHAT we are here speaking of, is the human nature of Christ, in which nature he hath performed all the offices of a priest, a prophet and king, and as being in human nature united to the divine, and as being in his divine nature, equal to the Father and one with him; all these things being considered in that place and order, in which we find them in the word, we may from the whole very justly and fairly account for the expression in the text, *then shall the son also be subject unto him that put all things under him*; the human nature of Christ, all offices being laid aside, is nevertheless, by its ineffable and eternal relation to the deity, and by the gift of God the Father, in consideration of his obedience and sufferings, at the head of all the creation of God, and will continue

^a Psa. xvi. 8, 9—11. Acts ii. 25.—28.

tinue so as long as eternity itself endure; the last expression of the text, is

THAT God may be all in all.

Next to the doctrine of the being and existence of God, we are both naturally and necessarily taught to conclude from thence that he is all in all. St Paul thus reasons with the Athenian philosophers, *in him we live and move, and have our being, for all we are his offspring*^a; and in this manner he concludes upon the divine decrees; that deep, that mysterious, incomprehensible doctrine of divine revelation,

O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! for who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? for of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for evermore^b.

THAT the world lies at present in great disorder and confusion, may be seen by the light of nature and reason; but how all this came, and to such a prodigious degree, its deadly evil, its dangerous consequences, and the only way of delivering the world from it for ever, is only to be known by the light of the gospel.

SIN is of such a pernicious nature, that where it comes, and so far as it prevails, it perverts every thing, and throws every thing into disorder and confusion; darkens the
glory

^a Acts xvii. 28. ^b Rom. xi. 33-36.

glory of the deity; and still tends to make reasonable and intelligent beings, who remain under its influence, see the works of God in his dispensations, both of providence and grace, in a false and mistaken light.

AND so thick a darkness has sin spread over the minds of men, that nothing can effectually remove it, but the light of divine grace, shining through Christ Jesus in the gospel*.

THIS then may well be thought to be the great scope and design of the dispensation of grace in the gospel; that those who are by nature, and by sin enemies to the sovereignty of God, might be reconciled to it; and that those who are *made willing in the day of Christ's power*, and that by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit in them, they may, through life, be more and more wrought over to a hearty and gracious acquiescence with the will of God; and that at last being brought beyond all the power of clouds and darkness, they may in heaven see it, and be for ever happy in the contemplation of it; having all the powers of their minds melted down with the flame of divine love, and poured out into holy, constant, everlasting acquiescence and delight in the divine will.

THE celebration of this is called the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the lamb.

“GREAT and marvellous are thy works Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou on-

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ly art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest ^a."

FINALLY, when it is thus expressed in the text, that God *may* be all in all, it can mean no more than this, that by this finishing act of Christ, *his giving up the kingdom to God, even the Father*, and himself being subject to him; that full room is now given to make it appear not only that God is, but he always was, and will for ever be all in all, *every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* ^b.

Now every cloud, and even every shadow of a cloud will be done away, that could any way lessen the glory of the sovereign authority of God, in over-ruling and disposing of all things: now every objection against God's being all in all in the way of grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, will be fully, and for ever answer'd; whatever doubts and difficulties the saints themselves might have during the error, weakness, and impfection of this mortal life; whatever temptation might suggest to their weak mind, concerning the seeming inequality of the distributions of providence and grace; all these objections will then be fully solved, to their everlasting satisfaction.

THE only thing yet remaining, is, how we may conceive of the glory of Christ as seen in heaven, since God is said to be all in all.

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^a Rev. xv. 3, 4. ^b James i. 17

IN this case I would do, as I have hitherto done, through the whole of these subjects, content myself with what light I may be able to gain from the word of God itself; and here, an observation on two scriptures, shall conclude the whole.

WHEN Christ shall come the second time without sin unto salvation, it is said, as one great end of his coming, that it is, *that he may be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe*: the words are more full and comprehensive than if he had only said, when Christ shall come to be glorified *by his saints*, and to be admired *by all them that do believe*; because all those graces which shone in them in the present life, and which will then shine forth in their full and utmost glory and perfection will then appear to be the alone work of his spirit and grace in them, and as the certain evidence of their living union with him.

AND what may well support this observation is, what the apostle adds at the end of the verse, *because our testimony was believed among you*, in that day. *q. d.* It will fully appear in that day, *that their election was of God, because the gospel came to them not in word only but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance* ^a.

IN this glorious light will the graces of the saints for ever shine, and the glory of Christ in them; for heaven itself will not dissolve the union between Christ and his church, but will consummate and compleat the glory of that rela-

^a 1 Thes. i. 4, 5.

relation; this is the glory of Christ *in his saints*, i. e. his glory in their graces, wrought up to their full and everlasting perfection.

Rev. xxi. ver. 22, 23. saith St. John, I saw no temple in the heavenly city, and this he gives as the reason, for, saith he, *the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it*, i. e. the human nature of Christ, is the everlasting temple of the deity, Col. ii. 9.

VER. 23. "And the city had no need of the sun, or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamb is the light of it."

WHAT can assist our meditations on such subjects, while in this life, but the light of grace? and from whom proceeds the light of grace, but from Christ the *sun of righteousness*, the light of men, the light of life? In the beginning of the gospel, Christ *was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*; in heaven all ordinances, and forms of worship, peculiar to the gospel-state, being laid aside, Christ himself is still the same — *for ever* *.

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IN heaven every temporary, every transient medium being laid aside, the glory of the deity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, beam through the human nature of Christ, with all those full rays of light, that it is possible for men or angels to behold and live *.

* Heb. xiii. 8.

* Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live, Exod. xxxiii. 20. 1 Tim. i. 17. Ch. vi. 16. Col. i. 15.

Glory to God. Amen.

